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HISTORY *of* WAR



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HANGMAN**
THE MOST DARING
NAZI ASSASSINATION

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Discover how Henry IV
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ISSUE 34

ESCAPE FROM *Colditz*



**OUT OF PRINT IN ENGLISH FOR NEARLY THIRTY YEARS,
THE CLASSIC BRITISH BOARDGAME RETURNS!**

*E*scape from Colditz was designed by Major Pat Reid, one of only a handful of prisoners-of-war to escape the legendary Colditz Castle, and his close friend Brian Degas, writer of the iconic *Colditz* television series.

Become Allied escape officers – assemble your equipment, plot your escape routes, and coordinate your efforts to avoid the guards.

Become the German security officer – maintain control through guile, ruthlessness, and careful observation despite limited numbers.

This deluxe edition of the classic game for 2 to 6 players includes both original and updated rules, new hand-painted artwork by Peter Dennis, an oversized board, 56 wooden playing pieces, 100 fully illustrated cards, a 32-page history book, and unique replicas of artefacts from the prison.

Nearly seventy-five years ago, Major Reid braved barbed wire, searchlights, and armed guards to escape from Colditz. Now it's your turn to do the same.



AVAILABLE OCTOBER 2016



Welcome

“A film was later made called *A Bridge Too Far* but how could it have been too far when I was there for days? It wasn't too far for me.”

– Stephen Morgan, Market Garden veteran

In September 1944, more than 10,000 paratroopers of the 1st Airborne Division were dropped over Holland. The objective was to take and hold the bridge at Arnhem – one of the key points in Montgomery's plan to bring an end to the war.

This issue we are proud to present the stories of two former paratroopers who fought at Arnhem. They witnessed the tragedies and sacrifices made during the operation, as careful Allied plans turned into chaos.

Reading the accounts of veterans is always a humbling experience, bringing sobering clarity to the reality of war. Even

by merely reading their stories, we can gain greater appreciation and respect for their actions more than 70 years ago.



Tim Williamson
Editor



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CONTRIBUTORS



TOM GARNER

As well as sitting down to chat with two WWII veterans, this month Tom found a chance to return to his Medievalist roots, exonerating the *Braveheart*-induced vilification of Edward I (or was it the IV?) over on page 58.



ROB SCHÄFER

Rob continues his Heroes of the Reich series, exploring Imperial Germany's complex WWI medals system, as well as the stories of bravery behind them. This issue, read an account of Georg Meiser's death-defying trench raids (page 82).



MICHAEL HASKEEW

Now the subject of two new films, Operation Anthropoid was the only successful high-profile assassination of a Nazi official during World War II. Mike has unpacked the daring mission and its target: Reinhard Heydrich on page 48.

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British prisoners at Arnhem Bridge. They are unshaven after four days of fighting as water was scarce during the battle



ARNHEM

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Men from all over Britain's outlying empire played a vital role in the fight against the Central Powers

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Some of the men and officers of the Expeditionary Force who made their mark during WWI

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This campaign was among the greatest British victories in the Middle Eastern theatre

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Soldiers from across what is now India, Pakistan, Nepal served within the IEF

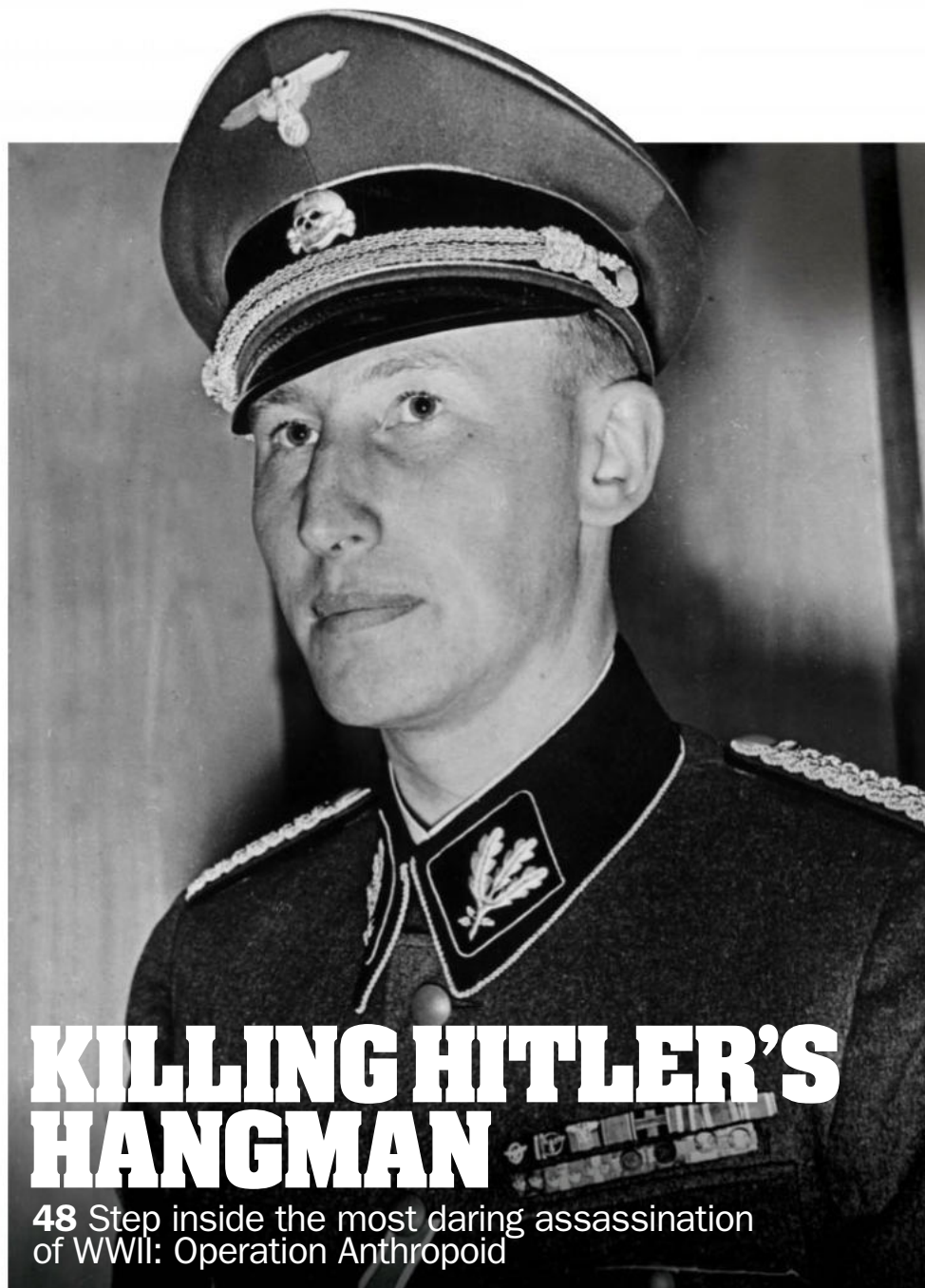
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Napoleon's horse (or at least part of him) is preserved in this unique piece of silverware



MACV-SOG

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WAR_{in} **FOCUS**

GRIM SOUVENIRS

Taken: c.1942

Three Soviet soldiers pose with captured boots, stahlhelms and a Nazi flag on the Eastern Front. The equipment had once belonged to members of a Luftwaffe Field Regiment destroyed near the port town of Murmansk, near to the Finnish-Soviet border. Members of the Luftwaffe had been transplanted into ground infantry units as early as 1942, as Operation Barbarossa quickly drained the Third Reich's manpower.





WAR_{in} **FOCUS** **HELL WEEK**

Taken: August 2015

Navy SEAL recruits perform push-ups and exercise drills during the infamous Hell Week, part of the BUD/S (Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL) training. For 5.5 days, candidates face incredibly tough challenges that test their mental and physical endurance, as well as their ability to operate in extreme conditions. On average, only a quarter of all SEAL candidates complete Hell Week and go on to complete their training.





WAR_{in} **FOCUS**

THE BATTLE OF FÈRE- CHAMPENOISE, 1814

Painted: 1891

Russian Horse Guards crash into French artillery and cuirassiers at Fère-Champenoise, during the invasion of France in March 1814. Just five days after the battle on 30 March, Paris itself was under attack by coalition forces. Napoleon I abdicated the throne shortly after.

WAR_{in} **FOCUS**

EYES ON THE SKY

Taken: c.1917

A French machine-gun team poses in position, as if prepared to attack enemy aircraft, during the Second Battle of Aisne. This is one of a series captured by Fernand Cuville, who photographed soldiers behind the lines and used the autochrome developing technique to restore colour to the pictures. His photographs depict scenes behind the front line, of soldiers at rest, recuperating and of civilians caught up in the conflict.





TIMELINE OF THE...

INDIAN ARMY 1914-19

Troops from all over the subcontinent served in theatres of operations across the globe, throughout WWI

SERVICE ON THE WESTERN FRONT

Arriving in September 1914, the Indian Corps and Indian Cavalry Corps participated in the Battles of La Bassée (October 1914) and Neuve Chapelle (March 1915). The two infantry divisions and the two cavalry divisions were eventually withdrawn to Egypt.

September 1914-March 1918

November 1914

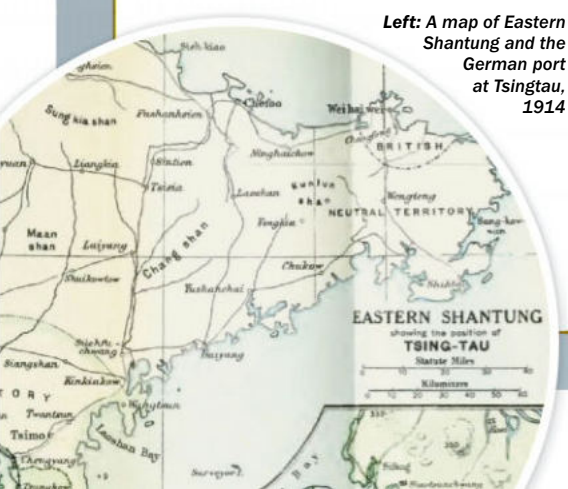
October-November 1914

November 1914-October 1918

SIEGE OF TSINGTAO, CHINA

The 36th Sikhs participated in the Siege of Tsingtao, a German port in China, as part of a small British contingent from the garrison of Tianjin. This was attached to a larger Japanese force that besieged, and eventually captured, Tsingtao.

Left: A map of Eastern Shantung and the German port at Tsingtao, 1914



EAST AFRICA

An ambitious plan to invade German East Africa, employing two Indian brigades, was defeated by their German opponents in the Battles of Tanga and Kilimanjaro during November 1914.



Painting by Martin Frost of Battle Of Tanga, 3-5 November 1914 (Germans on the left, British/Indians on the right)

THE CAMPAIGN IN MESOPOTAMIA

The largest force to serve abroad was in Mesopotamia, which remained a mainly Indian Army campaign. Arriving in November 1914 to protect oil installations around Basra, early success was followed by the surrender at Kut-al-Amara in April 1916. This disaster was redeemed by the capture of Baghdad in March 1917 and the Battle of Sharqat in October 1918, which contributed to the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire.

Indian Lancers on the march through the French countryside, 2 August 1915



A wounded Indian officer shows off a German helmet he captured at Neuve Chapelle



IN EGYPT AND PALESTINE

Indian Forces were sent to Egypt (October 1914) to defend the Suez Canal and Sinai Peninsula against Ottoman invasion (1915-16). They then participated in the recapture of Sinai and the invasion of Palestine (1917-18). Indian troops really came into their own following the withdrawal of British troops to the Western Front, notably in the famous victory of Megiddo in September 1918, which resulted in the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and the Armistice of Mudros in October 1918 and ended the campaign.

October 1914-October 1918

April-August 1915

1914-19

THE GALLIPOLI CAMPAIGN

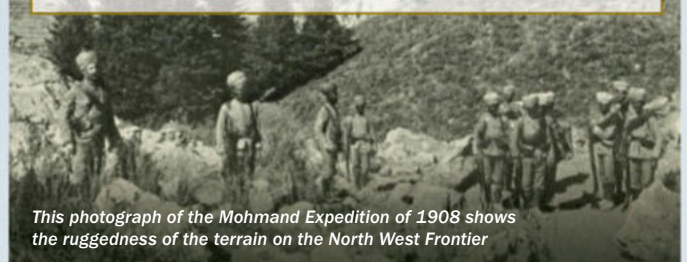
In April 1915, the 29th Indian Brigade was sent from Egypt to Gallipoli. In June, it participated in the Third Battle of Krithia, the Battle of Gully Ravine and the Battle of Sari Bair in August 1915, before being withdrawn to Egypt.



British staff officers interrogating Ottoman prisoners during the Third Battle of Krithia in August 1915

FRONTLINE IN INDIA

The Indian Army maintained internal security and defended India. On the North West Frontier, operations took place against the Tochi (1914-15), the Mohmands, Bunerwals and Swatis (1915), Kalat (1915-16), Mohmand Blockade (1916-17), the Mahsuds (1917), the Marri and the Khetran (1918) and in the Third Afghan War (1919). On the North East Frontier, punitive actions were launched in Burma against the Kachins (1914-15) and the Kuki (1917-19).



This photograph of the Mohmand Expedition of 1908 shows the ruggedness of the terrain on the North West Frontier

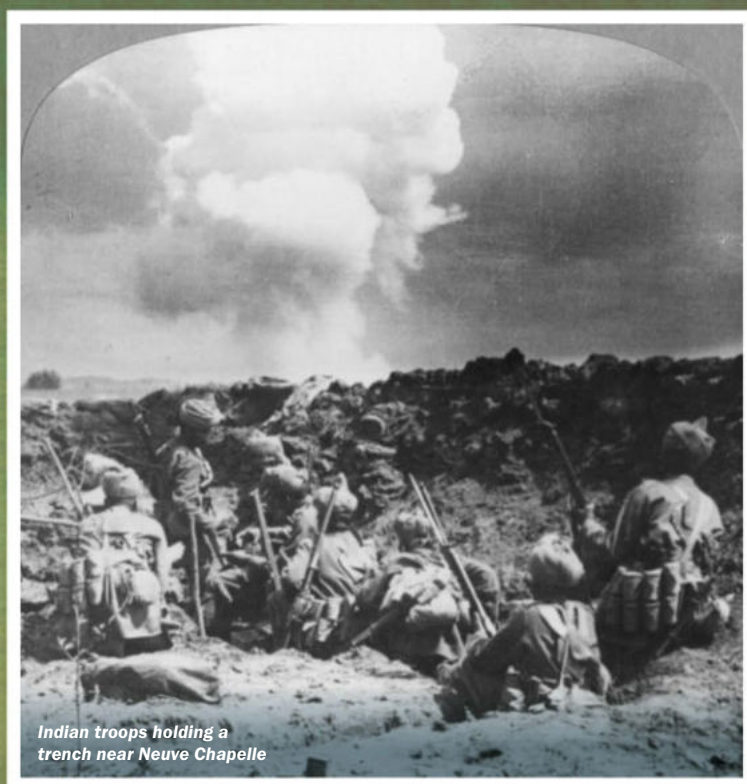
A GLOBAL EXPEDITION

The Indian Army served in many of World War I's most gruelling theatres, acting as a strategic reserve for the British Empire

1 BATTLE OF THE NEUVE CHAPPELLE

NEUVE CHAPPELLE, FRANCE, WESTERN FRONT: 10-13 MARCH 1915

After a short bombardment, the 7th (Meerut) Division broke through the German frontline and captured Neuve Chapelle on 10 March 1915, but were unable to exploit their initial success.



Indian troops holding a trench near Neuve Chapelle

2 THE SIEGE OF KUT-AL-AMARA

KUT-AL-AMARA, MESOPOTAMIA: 7 DECEMBER 1915 – 29 APRIL 1916

Having retreated from Ctesiphon, the 6th (Poona) Division, under Major-General Charles Townshend, is besieged in Kut and finally is forced to surrender after all attempts to relieve him fail.

Below: British soldiers and animal transports advancing through the desert to relieve the garrison at Kut in 1916



3 THE THIRD BATTLE OF KRITHIA AEGEAN SHORE, CAPE HELLES, GALLIPOLI PENINSULA, TURKEY: JUNE 1915

Attached to the 29th (British) Division, the 29th Indian Brigade attack on the Aegean shore along Gully Spur and Gully Ravine, but are quickly halted, losing heavy casualties.

4 THE SECOND BATTLE OF YPRES

YPRES, BELGIUM, FLANDERS, WESTERN FRONT: 26 APRIL-1 MAY 1915

The 3rd (Lahore) Division deploy to Ypres to participate in the British counter-attack to restore the situation after the first use of gas by the Germans on 22 April 1915.

5 SIEGE OF TSINGTAO

TSINGTAO, KIACHOW (JIAOZHOU) BAY, SHANTUNG (NOW SHANDONG) PENINSULA, CHINA: 31 OCTOBER – 7 NOVEMBER 1914

One Indian Army battalion, the 36th Sikhs from the garrison of Tianjin in China, participates in the capture of Tsingtao, a German controlled port, by a Japanese force.

6 BATTLE OF TANGA

TANGA, TANGANYIKA (TANZANIA), GERMAN EAST AFRICA: 2-5 NOVEMBER 1914

Two brigades with supporting troops invade German East Africa, landing at Tanga. After suffering heavy casualties from the outnumbered German forces, led by Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck, they re-embark and withdraw.

BATTLE OF SHARQAT

OCTOBER 1918 MESOPOTAMIA (IRAQ)

CAPTURE OF BAGHDAD BY GENERAL SIR FREDERICK STANLEY MAUD
MARCH 1917 BAGHDAD, MESOPOTAMIA (IRAQ)

BATTLE OF HANNA

JANUARY 1916 RELIEF OF KUT-AL-AMARA
MESOPOTAMIA (IRAQ)

INDIAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE ARRIVES IN BASRA

NOVEMBER 1914 BASRA, MESOPOTAMIA (IRAQ)

BATTLE OF KILIMANJARO

NOVEMBER 1914 BORDER OF BRITISH AND GERMAN EAST AFRICA

BATTLE OF CTESIPHON

NOVEMBER 1915 MESOPOTAMIA (IRAQ)

INDIAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE SAILS FROM BOMBAY FOR THE MIDDLE EAST

OCTOBER 1914 BOMBAY, INDIA

THE SINGAPORE MUTINY BY SEPOYS OF THE 5TH LIGHT INFANTRY

FEBRUARY 1915 SINGAPORE

7 OPERATIONS IN THE TOCHI VALLEY

TOCHI VALLEY, NORTH WAZIRISTAN, NORTH WEST FRONTIER, INDIA: 28 NOVEMBER 1914 – 27 MARCH 1915

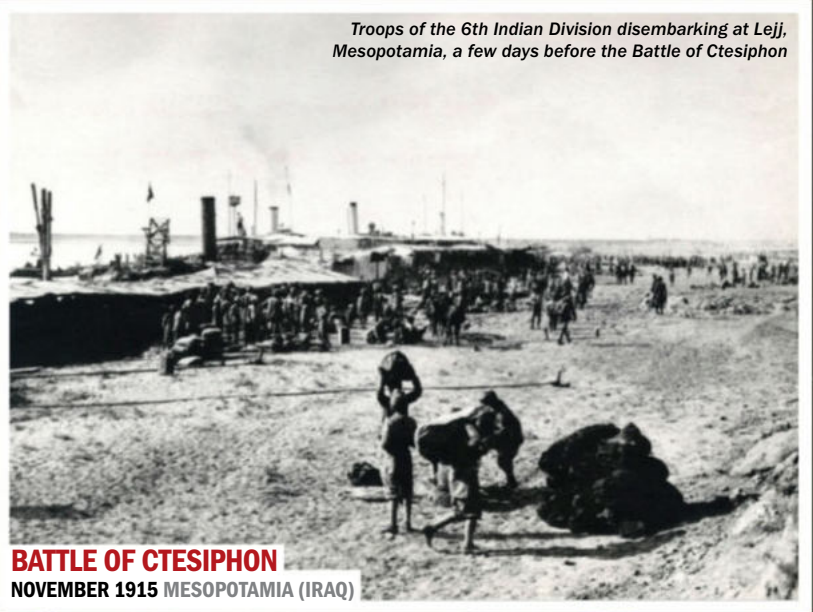
Troops of the North Waziristan Militia and the Bannu Brigade repulse the invasion of the Tochi Valley on the North West Frontier by raiding groups of Khostwal tribesmen from Afghanistan.

8 BATTLE OF THE MEGIDDO

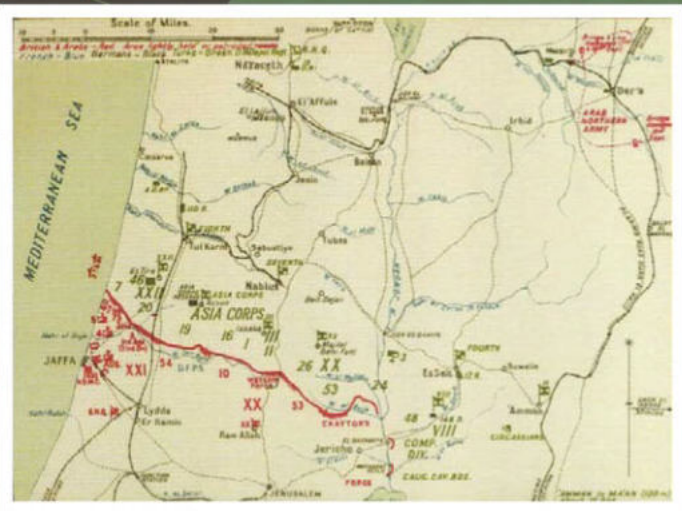
PLAIN OF SHARON, PALESTINE (ISRAEL): 19-25 SEPTEMBER 1918

The breakthrough of the infantry (XXI Corps) is ruthlessly exploited by the cavalry (Desert Mounted Corps), paving the way for the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in the Middle East.

Left: Sketch map showing the positions of the rival armies at zero hour, commencing the Battle of Megiddo, 19 September 1918

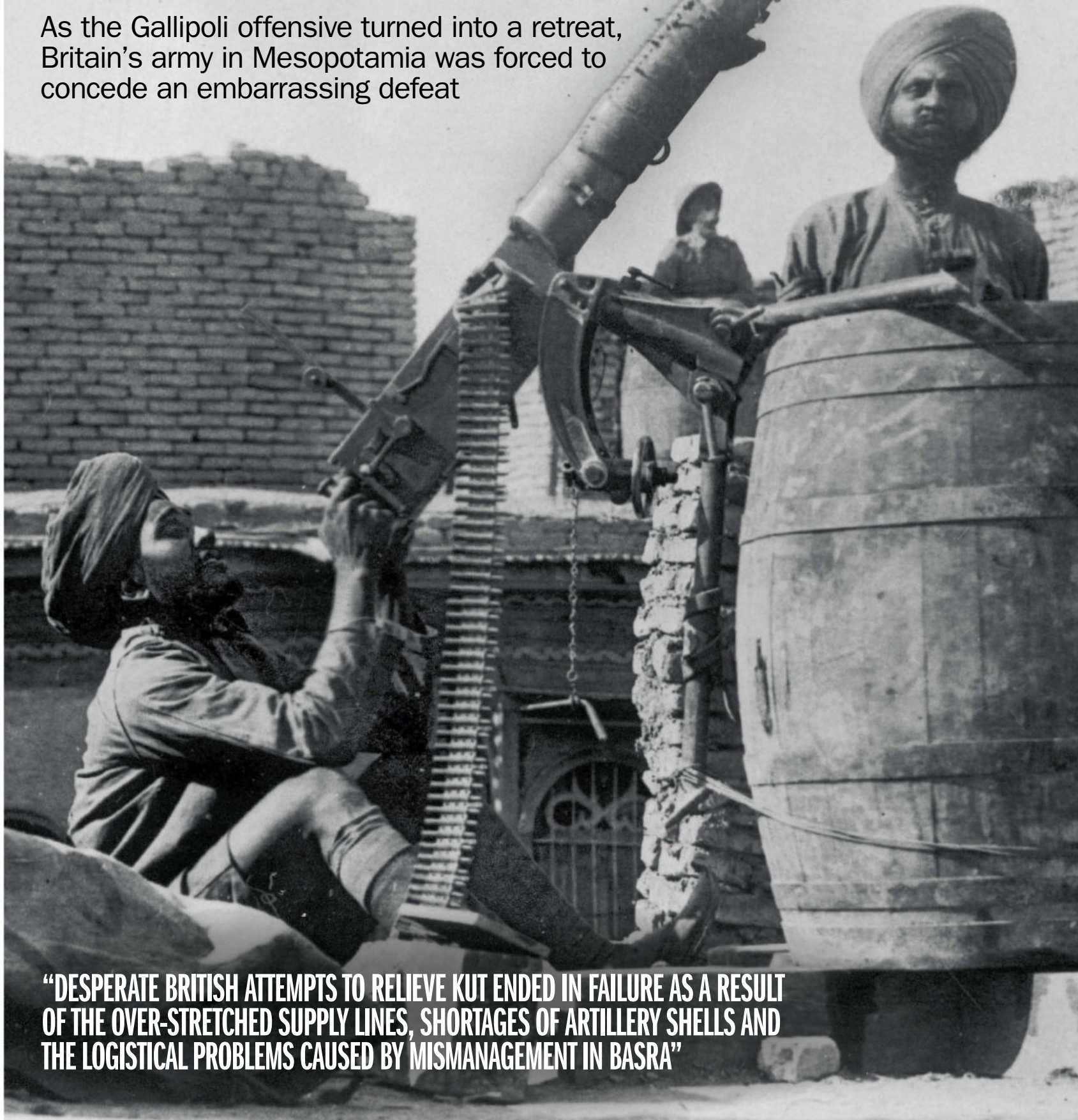


Troops of the 6th Indian Division disembarking at Lejj, Mesopotamia, a few days before the Battle of Ctesiphon



SIEGE OF KUT-AL-AMARA

As the Gallipoli offensive turned into a retreat, Britain's army in Mesopotamia was forced to concede an embarrassing defeat



"DESPERATE BRITISH ATTEMPTS TO RELIEVE KUT ENDED IN FAILURE AS A RESULT OF THE OVER-STRETCHED SUPPLY LINES, SHORTAGES OF ARTILLERY SHELLS AND THE LOGISTICAL PROBLEMS CAUSED BY MISMANAGEMENT IN BASRA"

On the lookout for Ottoman fighters, soldiers man an improvised anti-aircraft machine gun



The Siege of Kut (7 December 1915 – 29 April 1916) is one of the most controversial campaigns of WWI, and a humiliating defeat for the British Army, surpassed only by the surrender of Singapore in February 1942. There is endless debate about the reasons for this failure, but the flawed character of Major-General Sir Charles Townshend is at the centre.

A flamboyant Francophile with a reputation for being ambitious, Townshend was unpopular with his fellow officers, who viewed him as an intriguer, forever lobbying and scheming for promotion. His arrogant quest for glory and promotion led him to take unnecessary risks.

A descendant of Field Marshal George Townshend, 1st Marquess Townshend, Charles became a national hero during the Siege of Chitral on the North-West Frontier (1895). In April 1915, he took command of the 6th (Poona) Division in Basra.

Having captured the city and secured its oil fields, there was no strategic need for the British to advance up the Tigris, but both Lieutenant-General Sir John Nixon, the commander of the Indian Expeditionary Force in Mesopotamia, and Townshend wanted to take Baghdad.

He began his advance from Basra along the River Tigris to capture Amarah and Lower Mesopotamia from the Ottomans on 31 May 1915. This opening phase progressed well against superior opposition in difficult terrain and climate, taking Amarah in June 1915 with comparatively little fighting.

As long as the outcome of the Gallipoli campaign was in doubt, the Ottomans had largely ignored Townshend's advance up the Tigris. But by August 1915, it was clear that the stalemate following the failure of the British landings at Suvla Bay had ended British chances of taking Constantinople. This allowed the Ottomans to send substantial reinforcements under General Nureddin Pasha to oppose Townshend, who lacked heavy artillery and was handicapped by a shortage of hospital ships for the treatment of the wounded and sick. By autumn 1915, illness had incapacitated much of Townshend's force. There was also discontent among many of the Muslim Indian soldiers who were unhappy at fighting fellow Muslims, and so deserted Townshend.

Nevertheless, following the capture of Kut-al-Amara in September 1915, the fatal and debatable decision was taken to advance towards Baghdad rather than consolidate.

Relations between Nixon and Townshend were extremely poor, but both were united in the conviction that the Ottoman army was of such inferior quality that caution was superfluous, although Townshend, having advanced more than 800 kilometres up the Tigris, was at the end of a long supply line.

After recent setbacks, Herbert Asquith's Liberal government approved the advance, hoping that the capture of Baghdad would secure a much-needed victory. In November 1915, Townshend advanced along the Tigris from Kut-al-Amara to Ctesiphon, where an indecisive battle against Nureddin Pasha's superior forces resulted in heavy losses for both sides. With his advance on Baghdad thwarted, Townshend retreated, pursued by the Ottomans, who in December surrounded Kut-al-Amara. Townshend could have withdrawn to Basra but instead made a stand at Kut in the hope of repeating his earlier success at Chitral.

Desperate British attempts to relieve Kut ended in failure as a result of over-stretched supply lines, shortages of artillery shells and the logistical problems caused by mismanagement in Basra. Having run out of food, Townshend surrendered on 29 April 1916. Following the British withdrawal from Gallipoli, this prompted jubilation all over the Ottoman Empire.

Indian prisoners taken after the surrender were forced to undertake a brutal 'death march' under the scorching hot sun to camps in Anatolia, while constantly being mistreated by their guards. Many died either on the death march or in the camps. By contrast, Townshend and his officers were well treated. Townshend was taken up the Tigris to Baghdad and sat out the war in luxury, unable to understand why his behaviour was criticised. After the war, between 1919 and 1922, the British government made a serious effort to try Ottoman leaders who had planned the Armenian genocide, but also those responsible for the death march and mistreatment of the troops captured.

Sir Charles Townshend, who oversaw the British campaign in Mesopotamia, was captured alongside his men



Below: These emaciated POWs were freed as part of a prisoner exchange after the siege



HEROES OF THE IEF

The Indian Expeditionary Force boasted some of the war's bravest and most talented soldiers

FIELD MARSHAL SIR WILLIAM SLIM

YEARS ACTIVE: 1914-52 **ALLEGIANCE:** 6TH GURKHA RIFLES

Bill Slim (1891-1970) led the Fourteenth Army (the "Forgotten Army") in India and Burma during World War II and, afterwards, became the first British officer who had served in the Indian Army to become chief of the general staff and the 13th governor-general of Australia.

Slim made his name as a junior officer during World War I, being twice wounded in action. As governor-general, many Australians regarded him as an authentic war hero who had fought with the Anzacs at Gallipoli. Commissioned as a temporary subaltern with the Royal Warwickshire Regiment in August 1914, he was badly wounded at Gallipoli, where he first acquired his admiration for the Gurkhas, and an ambition to join the Indian Army.

Given a regular commission in the West India Regiment (June 1916) while recovering in England from bullet wounds

to his arm, lung and shoulder – which threatened his future career as a soldier – he rejoined the Royal Warwickshire Regiment in Mesopotamia in October 1916. Participating in the retaking of Kut-al-Amara (February 1917) and the capture of Baghdad (March 1917) under General Sir Stanley Maude – who re-invigorated the campaign in the same way that Slim was later to transform the Burma Campaign – he earned the Military Cross for outflanking a line of Ottoman trenches but he was wounded a second time by a shell on 29 March 1917.

Returning to duty in November 1917, he spent the rest of the war serving as a junior staff officer at army headquarters in India, and obtained a transfer to the Indian Army. He went on to become one of the most famous Indian Army generals of all time.

Right: Field Marshal Sir William Slim as commander of the Fourteenth Army in Burma, commissioned by the Ministry of Information



FIELD MARSHAL SIR CLAUDE AUCHINLECK

YEARS ACTIVE: 1904-48 **ALLEGIANCE:** 62ND PUNJABIS



Field Marshal Sir Claude Auchinleck in July 1941

Field Marshal Sir Claude Auchinleck (1884-1981) was commander-in-chief in India in 1941, 1943-47, and in the Middle East in 1941-42. He was supreme commander of all British forces in India and Pakistan in 1947-48. Commissioned into the Indian Army in January 1903, and joining the 62nd Punjabis in April 1904, Auchinleck served throughout World War I.

Deployed with his regiment to defend the Suez Canal, he saw active service against the Ottomans at Ismailia in

February 1915, before moving to Aden in July 1915. Landing as part of the 6th (Poona) Division at Basra in December 1915, Auchinleck and his regiment served in the Mesopotamian campaign, taking part in the Battle of Hanna in January 1916. Becoming acting commanding officer in February 1917, he led his regiment during the Second Battle of Kut in February 1917 and the capture of March 1917. He ended the war in southern and central Kurdistan.

MAJOR GEORGE MASSY WHEELER VC

YEARS ACTIVE: 1915 **ALLEGIANCE:** 7TH HARIANA LANCERS

The grandson of Major-General Sir Hugh Massy Wheeler – who led the defenders of Cawnpore, that were massacred in 1857 – and educated at Bedford Modern School, George Godfrey Massy Wheeler (1873-1915) was 42 when he won the Victoria Cross at Shaiba, Mesopotamia on 12 April 1915.

Major Wheeler led his squadron of the 7th Haryana Lancers in an attempt to capture a flag that was the centre-point of a group of the enemy who were firing on one of the picquets. Advancing, he attacked the enemy's infantry with the lance, but then retired when the enemy swarmed out of hidden ground to form an excellent target for the nearby guns of the Royal Artillery. On 13 April, Major Wheeler led his squadron in an attack on the north mound. He was seen far ahead of his men, riding straight for the enemy's standards, but was killed during this attack.

George Massy Wheeler attempting to capture the enemy standard



SEPOY CHATTA SINGH VC

YEARS ACTIVE: 1916

ALLEGIANCE: 9TH BHOPAL INFANTRY

Chattha Singh VC (1887-1961) was born in the Talsanda District of Cawnpore. He was about 29 years old, and a Sepoy (later promoted to Havildar) in the 9th Bhopal Infantry, when he performed the gallant deed for which he was awarded the VC. On 13 January 1916, during the Battle of the Wadi on the Tigris Front in Mesopotamia, Sepoy Chattha Singh left cover to assist his commanding officer, who was lying wounded and helpless in the open.

Sepoy Chattha Singh bound up the officer's wound and then dug some cover for him with his entrenching tool, all the time being exposed to very heavy rifle fire. For five hours, until nightfall, he remained with the wounded officer, shielding him with his own body on the exposed side. He then, under cover of darkness, went back for assistance, and brought the officer to safety.



Above: Chattha Singh VC meets Rajendrasinhji Jadeja, commander-in-chief of the independent Indian Army, in 1953

RISALDAR BADLU SINGH

YEARS ACTIVE: 1918

ALLEGIANCE: 14TH LANCERS (THE SCINDE HORSE)
ATTACHED TO THE 29TH LANCERS (DECCAN HORSE)

Risaldar Badlu Singh VC (1876-1918) was born in Dhakla village in the Rohtak District of the Punjab. He was serving as a Risaldar with the 14th (The Scinde Horse), but was attached to the 29th Lancers (Deccan Horse) in Palestine on 23 September 1918. He was killed at Khes Samariveh on the west bank of the Jordan River, showing the conspicuous bravery and self-sacrifice for which he was posthumously awarded the VC.

While his squadron charged a strong enemy position, Badlu Singh realised that it was suffering casualties from a small hill on the left, which was occupied by machine guns and about 200 infantry. Without hesitation, and disregarding the danger, he collected six other ranks, charged and captured the position. He was mortally wounded on the hill while capturing one of the machine guns single-handed, but the enemy had surrendered to him before he succumbed to his wounds.

JEMADAR MIR DAST VC IOM

YEARS ACTIVE: 1894-1917

ALLEGIANCE: 55TH COKE'S RIFLES
ATTACHED TO 57TH WILDE'S RIFLES



Jemadar Mir Dast VC IOM (1874-1945) was an Afridi, who was born at Landai in the Tirah, which is now part of Pakistan. Although a Jemadar with the 55th Coke's Rifles (Frontier Force), Mir Dast was attached to 57th Wilde's Rifles (Frontier Force) when he performed the brave

deeds for which he won the VC.

On 26 April 1915, at Ypres at Wielje in Flanders, Belgium, Mir Dast led his platoon with great bravery during the attack, and afterwards, with all the British officers casualties, he rallied and commanded various parties of the regiment until a withdrawal was ordered. He also displayed great courage in carrying eight wounded British and Indian officers to safety while exposed to very heavy fire. He retired in 1917 with the rank of subedar and later died in Pakistan.

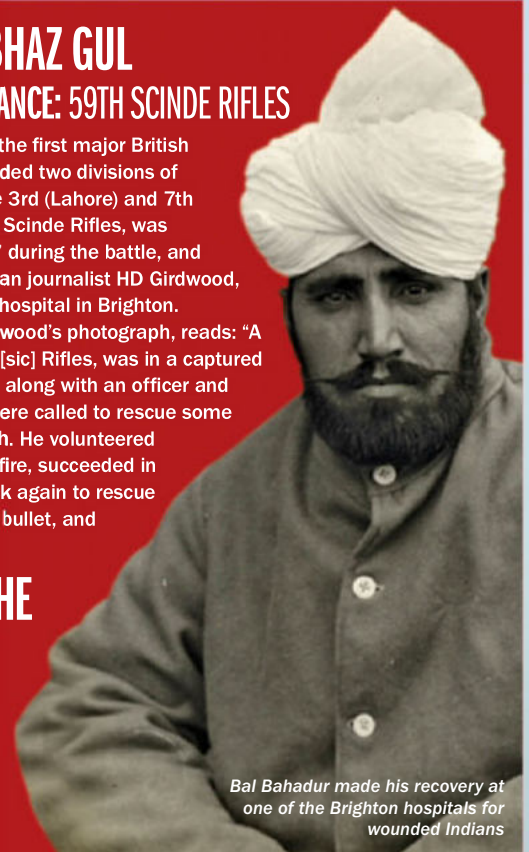
BAL BAHADUR AKA BHAZ GUL

YEARS ACTIVE: 1915 **ALLEGIANCE:** 59TH SCINDE RIFLES

The Battle of Neuve Chapelle was the first major British offensive of World War I, and included two divisions of the Indian Expeditionary Force; the 3rd (Lahore) and 7th (Meerut). Bal Bahadur, of the 59th Scinde Rifles, was 'promoted in the field for gallantry' during the battle, and was later photographed by American journalist HD Girdwood, as he was recovering at a military hospital in Brighton.

The caption accompanying Girdwood's photograph, reads: "A hero - Bhaz Gul of the 59th Scinde [sic] Rifles, was in a captured German trench at Neuve Chapelle, along with an officer and two other men, when volunteers were called to rescue some wounded men in front of the trench. He volunteered and, although exposed to a heavy fire, succeeded in rescuing one man. As he went back again to rescue a second, he was hit by a German bullet, and severely wounded."

"BAL BAHADUR, OF THE 59TH SCINDE RIFLES, WAS 'PROMOTED IN THE FIELD FOR GALLANTRY'"



Bal Bahadur made his recovery at one of the Brighton hospitals for wounded Indians

SUBEDAR SHAHAMAD KHAN VC

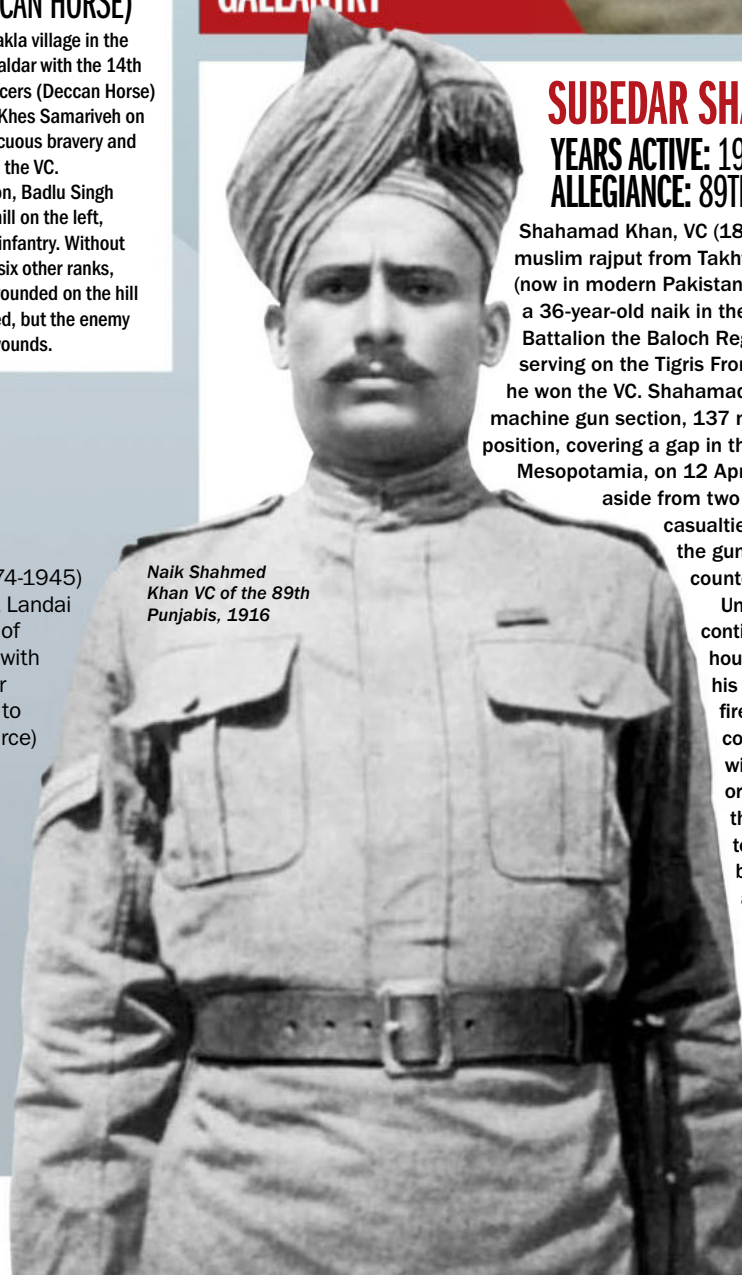
YEARS ACTIVE: 1915

ALLEGIANCE: 89TH PUNJABIS

Shahamad Khan, VC (1879-1947) was a Punjabi muslim rajput from Takhti in the Rawalpindi District (now in modern Pakistan). During the war, he was a 36-year-old naik in the 89th Punjabis (now 1st Battalion the Baloch Regiment in the Pakistan Army), serving on the Tigris Front in Mesopotamia when he won the VC. Shahamad Khan was in charge of a machine gun section, 137 metres from the enemy's position, covering a gap in the new line at Beit Ayeesa, Mesopotamia, on 12 April 1916. After all his men,

aside from two belt-fillers, had become casualties, Shamahad Khan, working the gun single-handed, repelled three counter-attacks.

Under extremely heavy fire, he continued to hold the gap for three hours while it was secured. When his gun was disabled by enemy fire, he and the two belt-fillers continued to hold the ground with their rifles until they were ordered to retire. Along with the three men who were sent to his assistance, he brought back to his own lines, his gun, ammunition and a severely wounded man. Eventually, he returned to remove all remaining arms and equipment, except for two shovels. But for his action, the enemy would, undoubtedly, have overrun the line.



Naik Shahmed Khan VC of the 89th Punjabis, 1916

THE BATTLE OF MEGIDDO 19-25 SEPTEMBER 1918

The final clash of the Palestine campaign from which the Ottoman Empire never recovered

The Ottoman Empire's entry into the war in October 1914 had threatened British interests in the Middle East, particularly with its attempt to seize the Suez Canal (1915-16). Contemporaneous British offensives resulted in withdrawal from Gallipoli and surrender at Kut-al-Amara, but the initiative was gradually regained with the capture of Baghdad in March 1917.

Stalemate in Palestine was broken by the appointment of Commander-in-Chief Sir Edmund Allenby, who captured Jerusalem in December 1917, but the German Spring Offensive of 1918 forced Allenby to abandon his plans, as troops were transferred to the Western Front. Allenby then rebuilt his forces with Indian Army formations, and resumed his attack on the Ottomans.

1. ALLENBY'S PLAN OF ATTACK

Allenby decided to attack along the coast on the Plain of Sharon, where the terrain was more suited to mounted operations. Once the infantry had broken through, his cavalry would exploit the gap, seizing objectives deep in the rear of the Ottoman Seventh and Eighth Armies.

2. THE DECEPTION PLAN

Deception was essential to success. This prevented the Ottomans from discovering Allenby's intentions. It also persuaded them that the attack would be in the Jordan Valley. Here, troops replicated the activity of the mounted corps, simulating troop movements and constructing dummy camps and horse lines.

3. RE-ORGANISATION OF FORCES

Although the deception plan did not induce the Ottomans to concentrate their forces in Jordan Valley, undetected, Allenby was able to concentrate a superior force opposite the Ottoman XXII Corps on the coast. This is where the main attack was to be launched.

4. PRELIMINARY OPERATIONS

On 16 September, the air force bombed Deraa, while Arab forces cut the railways from there. This further convinced the Ottomans that the British attack would be launched inland and they moved some reserves eastwards to meet this perceived threat.

5. PROBING ATTACKS

These were launched by two divisions in the Judean Hills on 17 and 18 September to keep Ottoman attention on the Jordan Valley, and then to block their retreat from Nablus across the Jordan once the main offensive had been launched.

6. THE MAIN ATTACK

On 19 September, the main attack by four infantry divisions (XXI Corps) overwhelmed two outnumbered Ottoman divisions on the coast, rapidly smashing through their first and second defensive lines. By the end of the day, the Ottoman Eighth Army was in disorderly retreat.

7. EXPANSION OF THE BRIDGEHEAD

On the left, the 60th Division advanced nearly 6.5 kilometres in the first two and a half hours of the attack, breaking through both the first and second Turkish lines. By the end of the first day, they had advanced a further 28 kilometres and had managed to capture and expand a bridgehead over the Nahr-el-Falik river.

8. COLLAPSE OF OTTOMAN RESISTANCE

By the end of the second day, the Ottoman Eighth Army had been destroyed. On the night of 20 September, Seventh Army evacuated Nablus, leaving rear guards to foil XX Corps's attempts to cut off its only line of retreat eastwards along the Jordan Valley.

9. EXPLOITATION BY THE CAVALRY

Within hours of the main attack, the three cavalry divisions (Desert Mounted Corps) massed behind the infantry and poured through the breach, riding north along the coast. By the end of 19 September, with no reserves available, the Ottoman Eighth and Seventh Armies were almost encircled.

10. THE PURSUIT

Securing the passes through the Carmel Range on 20 September 1918, the cavalry ruthlessly continued the pursuit, capturing Haifa on 23 September, Damascus on 30 September, Beirut on 8 October, Tripoli on 18 October and finally, Aleppo on 25 October. Having lost Palestine, Syria and Mesopotamia, an armistice was finalised on 30 October.

IMPORTANCE OF THE INDIAN ARMY

EDMUND ALLENBY'S INDIAN FORCES PROVED TO BE HIGHLY EFFECTIVE AND PROFESSIONAL IN THE REMARKABLE VICTORY OVER THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

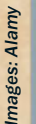


British aircraft harassed and destroyed Turkish carts and gun carriages on the Nablus-Beisan road

One of the best planned and executed battles of World War I, Megiddo produced decisive results at relatively small cost. Allenby, one of the most imaginative generals of the war, took much of the credit for this remarkable victory, but much praise must also go to the Indian troops who served under him.

Whether taking part in the set-piece infantry attacks under creeping barrages to break through the Ottoman defences in the initial phase of the operation, or encircling and relentlessly pursuing the fleeing Ottoman forces once the enemy defences had crumbled, the soldiers of the Indian Army had proved highly effective and professional.

The contribution of Indian troops during World War I remains a sadly neglected subject, yet they had helped to inflict a famous defeat on the Ottomans, which remains one of the war's most quintessential pitched battles. It was the equivalent of Ludendorff's 'Black Day' for the German Army at Amiens in August 1918. Like the defeats inflicted on the Germans in late 1918, Megiddo forced the Ottomans to recognise that their empire was unable to fight on, and to get them to sign the Armistice of Mudros, which finally ended hostilities between the Allies and Ottomans.



IN THE RANKS

Soldiers from across what is now India, Pakistan, Nepal and beyond served within the Indian Expeditionary Force during World War I

In 1914, the Indian Army contained 39 cavalry regiments, 138 infantry battalions, the Corps of Guides, three sapper regiments and 12 mountain batteries. There were also 20 cavalry regiments and 14 infantry battalions from the Princely States. During the war, more than 1 million Indian troops served overseas, providing an Imperial reserve – with units including the Gurkha Rifles and Mysore Lancers.

MYSORE LANCERS

THE 15TH CAVALRY BRIGADE PLAYED A HUGE ROLE IN ALLENBY'S ADVANCE IN 1918

Forces belonging to Mysore and other states had previously remained separate from the Indian Army, but the Mysore Lancers were reorganised in 1892 as part of the Imperial Service Troops (IST) scheme. The IST had been established to train troops from the armies of the Indian princely states up to the standard of the regular Indian Army. With the Jodhpur Lancers and the Hyderabad Lancers, the Mysore Lancers were one of three famous Indian State Forces Cavalry Regiments that

formed the 15th Cavalry Brigade (5th Cavalry Division, Desert Mounted Corps).

In the autumn of 1918, this brigade took part in one of the last great cavalry campaigns in history: Allenby's advance northward through Palestine, which pursued the remnants of the defeated Turkish Seventh and Eighth Armies. On 23 September 1918, the Jodhpur and Mysore Lancers captured Haifa with a dashing cavalry charge that is regarded as one of the finest ever made.

57TH WILDE'S RIFLES (FRONTIER FORCE)

BRITISH AND INDIAN OFFICERS OF THE 57TH WILDE'S RIFLES TOOK PART IN MAJOR BATTLES OF WORLD WAR I

Founded as the 4th Punjab Infantry Regiment in 1849, the regiment was renamed as the 57th Wilde's Rifles (Frontier Force) in 1903, and in 1947 was allocated to the Pakistan Army, continuing to exist as 9th Battalion, The Frontier Force Regiment.

In 1914-15, the regiment participated in Battles of La Bassée, Messines, Givenchy, Neuve Chapelle and Second Ypres on the Western Front. From 1916, the regiment participated in the protracted and arduous campaign in German East Africa.

Below: Officers of the 57th Rifles stop by the roadside for a group photo



"THE JODHPUR AND MYSORE LANCERS CAPTURED HAIFA WITH A DASHING CAVALRY CHARGE THAT IS REGARDED AS ONE OF THE FINEST EVER MADE"



THE GURKHA RIFLES

MORE THAN 100,000 GURKHA SOLDIERS, RECRUITED BY THE BRITISH IN NEPAL SINCE 1815, FOUGHT DURING THE WAR

Armed with their famous kukri knives, Gurkha battalions served against the Germans during the battles of Neuve Chapelle, Loos, Givenchy and Ypres on the Western Front between 1914 and 1915. They also participated in campaigns against the Ottoman Empire in Gallipoli, Mesopotamia, Persia and Palestine between 1914 and 1918.

Rifleman Kulbir Thapa (3rd Gurkha Rifles) won the VC at the Battle of Loos (25-26 September 1915) for rescuing three wounded British and Gurkha soldiers, although he himself was wounded. Rifleman Karanbahadur Rana (3rd Gurkha Rifles) won the VC in Palestine on 10 April 1918, knocking out an enemy machine gun with a Lewis Gun and then covering a withdrawal.



“GURKHA BATTALIONS SERVED AGAINST THE GERMANS DURING THE BATTLES OF NEUVE CHAPPELLE, LOOS, GIVENCHY AND YPRES ON THE WESTERN FRONT BETWEEN 1914 AND 1915”

Left: A Gurkha bombing party practice clearing a trench in a live fire drill

29TH LANCERS (DECCAN HORSE)

TROOPERS FROM 29TH LANCERS (DECCAN HORSE) BECAME A REGULAR PART OF THE INDIAN ARMY. THEY FOUGHT ON THE WESTERN FRONT IN 1914-18, SOMETIMES SERVING AS INFANTRY IN THE TRENCHES

Formed in 1790, the regiment served with the forces of the Nizam of Hyderabad until 1903, when it became the 29th Lancers (Deccan Horse) in the regular Indian Army. It fought on the Western Front, 1914-18, as part of the 8th (Lucknow) Cavalry Brigade (1st Indian, later 4th Cavalry Division), sometimes serving as regular infantry. From 1918, the regiment participated in the campaign in Palestine. Since independence from Britain, as the 9th Deccan Horse, it has formed part of India's Army.

Below: The 29th Lancers make their way through a shell-torn landscape



ARNHEM NOT "A BRIDGE TOO FAR"

Two British paratroopers share their vivid memories of the courageous attempt to liberate the Netherlands and bring WWII to a swift end

September 1944. In a sleepy Dutch town, British soldiers take up improvised positions in houses and other buildings. In their sight is a bridge that stretches over the River Rhine and in the distance they can hear the roar of approaching German tanks. If they can hold back the Panzers, a huge Allied force will relieve them, the Rhine will be crossed and the war will soon be over. Unfortunately this is, and remains to this day, just a plan. The soldiers are lightly armed paratroopers, the town is called Arnhem and the position they are defending has gone down in history as 'A Bridge Too Far' – a metaphor for the overstretched demands placed on a beleaguered force.

Although the Battle of Arnhem was the last major defeat of Allied forces in WWII, it has become legendary for the stubborn courage displayed by the 1st Airborne Division. Undersupplied, isolated soldiers ferociously fought a heavily armoured German army against the odds for days, but many were killed or captured and the war dragged on. If the complex plans to capture Arnhem and other nearby bridges had succeeded, the outcome might have been very different.

Today, 72 years after they parachuted into the Netherlands, two British veterans, Tom Hicks (97) and Stephen Morgan (91), recall their remarkable experiences of fighting at Arnhem. The following is their story.

Image © Alamy



“WHEN I WENT TOO FAR”

WORDS TOM GARNER



Stephen Morgan and Tom Hicks both fought in the Battle of Arnhem, but in different locations

**“A FILM WAS LATER MADE
CALLED A BRIDGE TOO FAR,
BUT HOW COULD IT HAVE
BEEN TOO FAR WHEN I
WAS THERE FOR DAYS? IT
WASN'T TOO FAR FOR ME”**

-Stephen Morgan



Private Stephen Morgan was only 19 years old when he fought at the Battle of Arnhem in the Parachute Regiment



British paratroopers in transport gliders en route to the Netherlands. Their optimistic poses would soon be replaced by grim fighting



STEPHEN MORGAN THE TEENAGE PARATROOPER

In September 1944, Private Stephen Morgan had just turned 19 years old, but he was enthusiastic and his reasons for going to war were personal: "I wanted to be a soldier. My family had lost seven close relatives and my father was gassed while he was in the Medical Corps in WWI. As a child I remember he was always in hospital and he died when I was 15." After joining the army, Morgan almost immediately applied to join the Parachute Regiment and was accepted. His first action would be Operation Market Garden, where his own objective would be to help take and hold Arnhem Bridge as part of 2nd Battalion under Lieutenant Colonel John Frost. Morgan was excited by the prospect, "I was keen to go, I couldn't get there fast enough. I was afraid that the war was going to be over before I could get out there."

On 17 September, a vast airborne flotilla of transport aircraft and gliders took off from British airfields en route for the Netherlands, all packed with equipment and paratroopers. Morgan was in the first wave and found the experience exhilarating. "It was wonderful. The aircraft flew close together and we went in the early lift because once we got there we had the furthest to go [to the bridge itself]." Jumping out of the plane was the final act. "It

was my first action jump. I'd only been with the Paras for six weeks before we went. I jumped in sunshine, it was a lovely drop. There were no problems, we weren't attacked or fired at."

Upon landing, the paratroopers had to move quickly, but they soon encountered the enemy. "As soon as we moved out of the rendezvous point, a leading platoon ran smack into a German armoured car that was lined full of infantry, but we had no problem. We set up the Bren guns and killed or captured every one of them." 2nd Battalion had to stay on the move if they were to achieve their objective. "Arnhem Bridge was our target from the word go, nothing else. We were told that even if you got fired at by the Germans on the way, we were not to attack. We had to push on all the time and hopefully there would be no Germans guarding the bridge." While en route, the local population welcomed the British. "There were lots of Dutch people coming out: women, children and girls kissing you." Pleasant though the welcome

**"I WAS AFRAID THAT THE WAR
WAS GOING TO BE OVER BEFORE
I COULD GET OUT THERE"**

was, the Dutch were slowing down the advance. "They held us up a bit. They were a hindrance until there were a few shots from the Germans and they all disappeared."

Skirmishes were already breaking out. "For me, the fighting began before I reached the bridge. At one point, I fixed my bayonet and charged up a hill to shoot some Jerries who were firing at us. Some officer or a sergeant came up behind me to give me a telling off, 'We're not supposed to fight them, we're here to get to that bridge'." On another occasion before Arnhem, Morgan witnessed one British soldier's extreme grit: "A sergeant got a bullet in the wedding tackle as he went across the road. He went to the first aid post and they put a sticky plaster on it and he came back to the platoon the same evening."

The "killing ground"

Finally, Morgan reached Arnhem Bridge itself. "I was with the first 50-80 men to get there, which was A Company. There was hardly anyone there, so I went onto the bridge, walked up and thought 'Where are these Germans?'" He found his answer. "I knew a couple of others had been fired at by Germans from some lorries so I went down to these trucks alone, banged on the side and out came two Germans. I took them prisoner." Shortly afterwards, Morgan helped to make defences in houses and buildings that overlooked the north end of the bridge: "You go in the houses, break the windows and all the glass. You don't want that flying around in a battle. Normally with street fighting you get up as high as you can, because it's easier to fire down on enemies coming in,



Arnhem Bridge c.1943. This was the prime objective for Operation Market Garden

than it is for you to get up there and attack them." When preparations were complete, Morgan settled in a house and managed to sleep. "There was no firing. I slept all night and woke up feeling fresh thinking, 'What's happening? There are no Germans about'." Soon, this situation would dramatically change.

"The fighting started when we were told, 'Alright, machine gun platoon this way.' I moved down to the other end of the bridge with a Welsh friend called Taffy Hellier. Neither of us liked the Germans and we got in a house, each of us manning a window.

"When the German armoured cars came across the bridge at about 10.30am (8 September) we knocked out the first couple and the others couldn't get by. They couldn't jump over the side to get away or they would have dropped about six metres and landed among our men, so they tried to run past. Taffy and I had a good time knocking them over as they ran across what we called our 'killing ground'."

Morgan remains unequivocal about his experiences fighting the enemy. "I loved it and couldn't kill enough of them, I wanted revenge for my father and family. I hated the Germans." Despite his animosity, however, Morgan respected the enemy's fighting ability. "They were good soldiers, no doubt about it. We could attack a house and drive them out but within minutes their NCOs would round them up and they would come straight back at you."

By Monday evening, Morgan found himself defending a building next to a sewage overflow into the Rhine with another young soldier. "They said, 'You two hold this and we'll send some more men in a few minutes.' The young lad

"WE COULDN'T GET ANY RESUPPLY OF AMMUNITION, GRENADES OR MORTAR BOMBS"

wasn't a combat soldier, he was a mechanic but he and I held that building alone all night. The Germans didn't seem to like fighting at night. It gave us an advantage because British troops preferred fighting under good cover."

The night-time lull was misleading, and the paratroopers came under mortar bombardment on 19 September, a situation that was hard to respond to. "We had five six-pounder anti-tank guns but no other artillery apart from a couple of mortars. In some ways it didn't matter as we had observation crews who could radio back and put fire down where we wanted it." However, in what became a notorious issue, the radio equipment was faulty and communication consequences were severe. "It was absolutely hopeless. The radios to the artillery seemed to be working but that was all. Between units and headquarters, we couldn't get through. There was no information. The highest officer that we had with us was Colonel Frost." Concerning his commanding officer, Morgan has nothing but praise: "He was wonderful. He was very well respected and everybody loved him."

Inferno

By 20 September, conditions in Arnhem had deteriorated and supplies were low. "Food didn't bother you, but the main trouble was

water. With the smoke and dust your mouth swelled up, your tongue was swollen, you couldn't talk properly." Morgan also had a continuing sense that things were not going well. "It crept up on you constantly because XXX Corps should have been with us by Monday night or Tuesday morning, but they never arrived, and we knew we were on our own. We could only fight to the end. Being a paratrooper means you're always isolated as you're dropped in the middle of the enemy but we couldn't get any resupply of ammunition, grenades or mortar bombs. We were down to bayonets. From that perspective, it was deadly."

Morgan was now taking part in close-quarters fighting and followed Lieutenant Andrew McDermont into a house occupied by the Germans. "As McDermont got up the stairs, a Jerry fired at him, catching him across the chest and he was knocked down. He fired again and hit McDermont's batman across the stomach. That left me to get up the stairs, but luckily Lance Corporal Dodds was behind me. He fired up and knocked this German over. That allowed me to get to the top of the stairs and I struck him with my bayonet."

Due to high casualties, Morgan was ordered out of the house. "I came out and we dashed across the road one at a time. I got under the bridge and there I met Lieutenant Grayburn. That was the first time I had ever seen him." John Grayburn had taken a leading part in defending the bridge and had organised and led attacks against the Germans, despite being wounded several times. Morgan recalls, "He was a hell of a man, when I met him he had been wounded four times. He had his arm in

INSIDE MONTY'S GAMBLE

"ALL RANKS NOW EXHAUSTED"

ALTHOUGH IT HAS NOW BECOME KNOWN AS THE LAST MAJOR ALLIED FAILURE OF WWII, MARKET GARDEN WAS AMBITIOUSLY DESIGNED TO END THE CONFLICT IN 1944



Above: Market Garden was the brainchild of the victor of El Alamein: Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery

By September 1944, Allied armies had pushed the Germans almost completely out of France and Belgium and the front line stood several miles short of the Dutch border. With success came crippling supply problems and it was agreed to give one army priority to carry out a plan to deal a final blow to the Germans, who were perceived to be on the point of collapse. The honour fell to the British 2nd Army under Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery and the plan was codenamed 'Operation Market Garden'.

Montgomery's plan was to fly three divisions (35,000 men) and land them in various parts of the Netherlands to capture five key bridges. This part was 'Market'. 'Garden' was the ground element, where British tanks of XXX Corps would simultaneously clear the front line and link up with the airborne troops to properly secure the bridges. Once taken, there would be no more river obstacles into Germany and the war could potentially be swiftly concluded.

As part of the largest airborne assault in history at that time, two of the three airborne divisions

were American, with the 101st tasked with taking two bridges around Eindhoven and the 82nd taking two at Nijmegen. The bridge at Arnhem was the ultimate goal and was entrusted to the British 1st Airborne Division and the 1st Independent Polish Parachute Brigade. These men were to drop 96 kilometres into enemy territory and it would be three days before British tanks reinforced them.

The plan was dangerously flawed. Speed and surprise had to be maintained if the lightly armed paratroopers were to survive and every element, both airborne and ground, had to work on time for the operation to succeed. However, there were not enough transport planes for a single mass drop, the roads for armoured vehicles were unexpectedly narrow and, despite intelligence warnings, the British paratroopers landed on top of two fresh, elite SS Panzer tank divisions around Arnhem. Consequently, despite liberating some parts of the southern Netherlands, Market Garden turned into a disaster. Instead of victory, Major General Roy Urquhart was forced to telegraph news near Arnhem: "All ranks now exhausted."



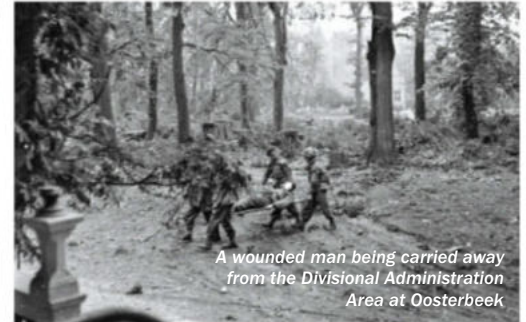
US paratroopers are dropped near Grave, Netherlands. Two of the three airborne divisions deployed during Market Garden were actually American



German soldiers at Oosterbeek. There was fierce hand-to-hand fighting around the perimeter



Four soldiers from the SS Reconnaissance Battalion captured at Arnhem on 18 September 1944



A wounded man being carried away from the Divisional Administration Area at Oosterbeek



Both Tom Hicks and Stephen Morgan parachuted into the Netherlands in Dakota aircraft

"I WAS THE LAST MAN OUT BECAUSE I ONLY HAD A FIGHTING KNIFE, NO AMMUNITION"

a sling, shrapnel in his shoulder, a bandage around his leg and torn trousers. He was in a bit of a state."

A German Tiger II tank now came down the bridge and parked 27 metres from Grayburn and Morgan, who were underneath. The tank commander knew the British were using the bridge as cover. "It didn't fire at us. It fired at the beams underneath, which dropped these lumps of concrete onto us." In the chaos Morgan found himself alone with the wounded

officer. "Grayburn said, 'Its time we left. Get across the road', so I did and he followed. However, by the time he had seen me go across, the Germans machine-gunned him and knocked him down on the road." Morgan was now in a desperate situation. "He fell but I knew he wasn't dead and I shouted to him. He replied, 'Get away, save yourself. Try and get back to the battalion'. I didn't, I crawled out to him and held his hand to let him know I was there because he was still conscious but he kept repeating, 'Get away, leave me, leave me'. He was dying, no doubt about it. He kept ordering me to leave, so that's what I eventually did. Even though he was a wounded comrade, he was an officer and he'd given me an order, but I've always had a bit of conscience about that." Grayburn died soon after, but, for his leadership and courage, he was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross.

Captured at Arnhem

The end was in sight for the paratroopers at the bridge. After chancing upon familiar British soldiers in a cellar, Morgan and

his friends tried to get away from Arnhem. "I was the last man out because I only had a fighting knife, no ammunition and I'd broken my gun in half so the Jerries couldn't use it." By daylight, the small troop had got away from the bridge and were drinking water from a radiator when the Germans found them. "They pointed a machine gun at the cellar where we were and that was it, 'Englanders come out'. What could we do? There was nothing to fight with. They didn't even search us, they just took us down the road to the bridge."

Before being taken into captivity, Arnhem had one final shock for Morgan. Earlier in the battle, he had found himself alone in a house surrounded by Germans. The house had been previously evacuated by Sergeant Sydney Power. "He realised I was missing, charged back across the road firing his gun and kept shouting 'Steve, get out. Get out'. I went flying down the stairs and got out all right. However, when we were taken prisoner they marched us past some bodies that lay across the road, Sergeant Joy told me that Sergeant Power was one of the dead." The struggle for the bridge was over, but the Battle of Arnhem was far from finished and other paratroopers were still fighting another desperate and dogged fight nearby at Oosterbeek.



Left: Members of 1st Parachute Squadron, RE, east of Arnhem, 20 September 1944. The wounded soldier, Dick Robb, was a friend of Tom Hicks

ARNHEM: NOT "A BRIDGE TOO FAR"

The aftermath of Market Garden at Nijmegen. Arnhem, with its almost identical bridge, would have been in a similar condition after the battle

"HE HAD HIS ARM IN A SLING, SHRAPNEL IN HIS SHOULDER, A BANDAGE AROUND HIS LEG AND TORN TROUSERS. HE WAS IN A BIT OF A STATE"

-Stephen Morgan on Lt. Greyburn





TOM HICKS

THE PARACHUTING ENGINEER



"IT WAS AWE-INSPIRING, I'D NEVER FLOWN IN SOMETHING LIKE THAT BEFORE"

Unlike the teenage Morgan, Tom Hicks was a seasoned soldier who had been in the army since war broke out. "I was called up for six months in 1939, but when the war started, they kept me for six years."

As a sapper in the Royal Engineers, Hicks was keen for adventure, "After being in a Royal Engineers railway section for about a year, I thought, 'This isn't terribly exciting'. Churchill wanted paratroopers so I thought, 'Here goes,' and joined in 1942."

Hicks became part of the 1st Parachute Squadron, Royal Engineers and took part in operations in North Africa and Sicily before returning to take part in Market Garden. This would be on a different level to his previous experiences when he took off on 17 September. "I flew in Dakotas. It was awe-inspiring, I'd never flown in something like that before. The sky was full, it was a nice morning and we had not just our formations but there were fighters above us too. In North Africa, there were usually small units and battalion strength was the highest number of formations that we'd done."

The jump was Hicks's third, but he was unsure about the operation. "My first jump was a washout, the second one was hectic but this one was so vast and there were so many planes. However, we had doubts when we were briefed because we were going to land 12 kilometres from the bridge and that was a long way." Upon landing, Hicks's objectives were different to Morgan's. "We were attached to the 3rd Battalion (Parachute Regiment). The 2nd Battalion's objective was to capture the bridge [at Arnhem] and ours was to capture the railway bridge, but when the 3rd Battalion got in the field, the Germans destroyed part of it."

A blocked advance

Upon landing, Hicks, like Morgan, immediately encountered Germans. "We ended up in a bean patch in a field and there were some Germans in the far corner causing some trouble. We managed to chase them off but the gliders were coming in half an hour and the area had to be cleared of wounded, baskets and other debris from the parachuting. This was to give the gliders a straight landing. When they started coming in, it was a sight I shall never forget. When they're coming in, they can't steer or manoeuvre, once he's cast off, his wheels come down and he's landing. They would come in very low, at about the height of a house. They were big, black ugly things and on the sides they had graffiti like 'Up Yours Adolf'."

After encountering light German resistance, Hicks and other paratroopers started their advance. "The push to Arnhem went through villages and roads. The 2nd Battalion was going hell for leather with no transport. The only thing we had were some fully armed Jeeps, which had assembled into a small convoy to race to the bridge. However, they were ambushed on

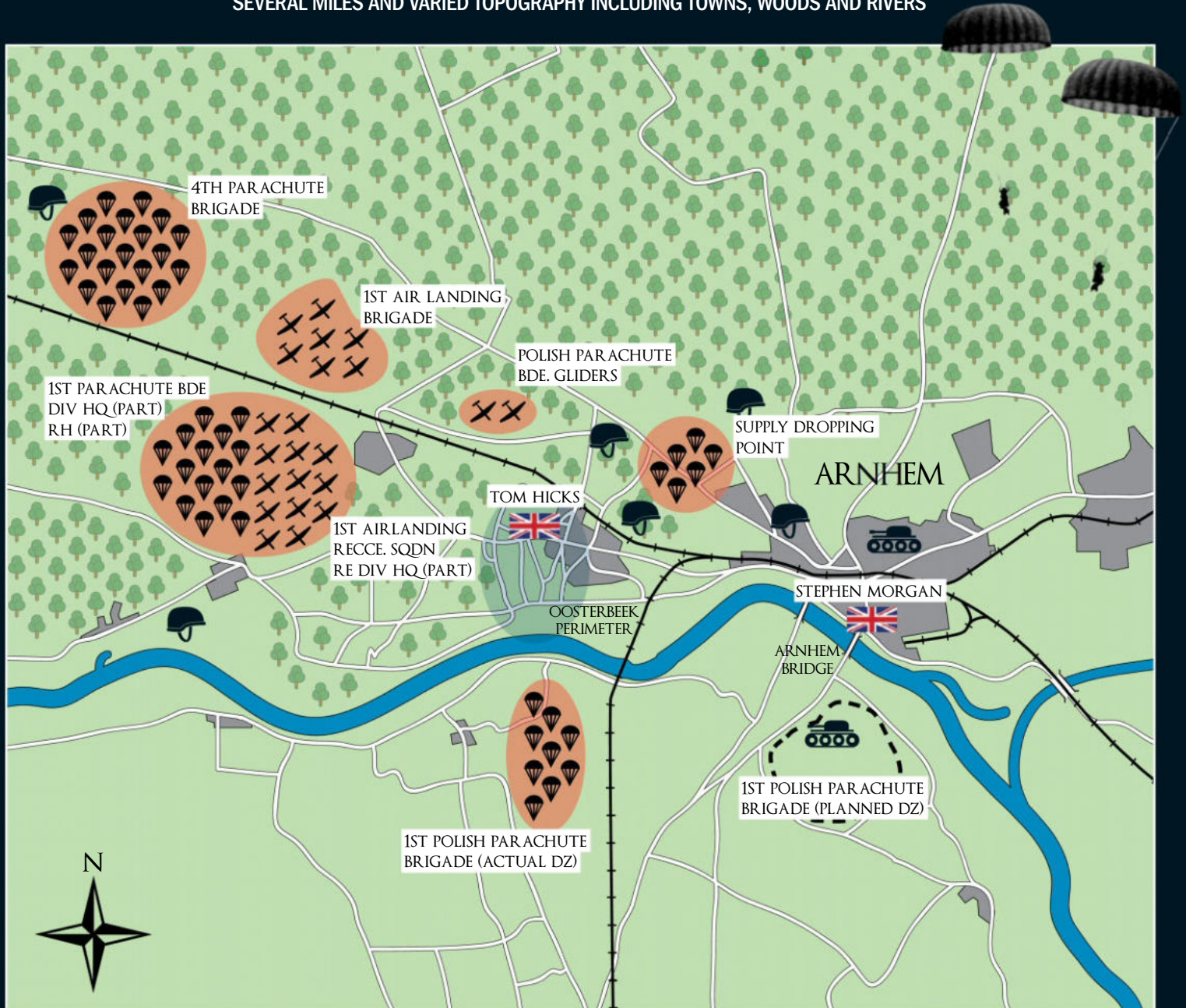


Clockwise from above: Three sappers taken prisoner; Men of the Border Regiment wait in ditches near Arnhem; Men of the South Staffordshire Regiment towing a six-pounder; Horsa and Hamilcar gliders in landing zone 'Z'

MARKET GARDEN

17-26 SEPTEMBER 1944

THE CENTRAL BATTLE OF MARKET GARDEN WAS A CONFUSING AFFAIR THAT WAS SPREAD OUT OVER SEVERAL MILES AND VARIED TOPOGRAPHY INCLUDING TOWNS, WOODS AND RIVERS



This map shows how the British meticulously planned several parachute drop zones and glider landing grounds near Arnhem. However, their planning did not take into account the German positions that were in and around the town, and the paratroopers found themselves landing on fresh enemy infantry and, most fatally, armoured units. Tom Hicks and Stephen Morgan ended up fighting miles apart, surrounded by a ferocious German counterattack.



Major General Roy Urquhart, commander of 1st Airborne Division, outside his headquarters at Oosterbeek in 1944

KEY



AXIS ARMOURD FORCES



AXIS INFANTRY BATTALION



BRITISH ARNHEM VETERAN



PARACHUTE DROP ZONES



GLIDER LANDING ZONES

VICTORIA CROSSES OF ARNHEM

THE BATTLE LED TO THE AWARDING OF FIVE VCS, FOUR OF THEM POSTHUMOUSLY. THESE INCLUDED FLIGHT
LIEUTENANT DAVID LORD AND LIEUTENANT JOHN GRAYBURN



Above: Flight Lieutenant David Lord VC

David Lord was a pilot in 271 Squadron, RAF Transport Command. At Arnhem, he was the captain of a Dakota aircraft that was detailed to drop supplies over the battle on 19 September 1944. At that time, the paratroopers had been surrounded into an area that was highly defended by German anti-aircraft guns. Lord's Dakota was hit by AA-fire at 450 metres near Oosterbeek, which set his starboard engine on fire.

At this point, Lord would have been justified to disengage but as his crew were uninjured and his drop zone was only three minutes away, he continued. Flying at 275 metres, Lord made two runs to drop all the supplies, while the engine blazed and under heavy anti-aircraft fire. Now at 150 metres, Lord ordered his crew to abandon the aircraft, but made no attempt to save himself. The starboard wing collapsed and the aircraft crashed.

His VC citation concluded, "By continuing his mission in a damaged and burning aircraft, descending to drop supplies accurately, returning a second time and remaining at the controls to give his crew a chance of escape, Flight Lieutenant Lord displayed supreme valour and self-sacrifice."

John Grayburn was a lieutenant in the Parachute Regiment, and he was a platoon commander at Arnhem tasked with seizing and holding the bridge over the Rhine. While attacking the bridge, Grayburn was shot through the shoulder, but continued to lead from the front over the next few days while occupying an exposed house.

The house was difficult to defend but despite repeated assaults, it did not fall for days, largely thanks to Grayburn's leadership. Although he was wounded, he led fighting patrols against advancing German tanks, and was further wounded.

At one point, he stood up in full view of a tank and personally directed the withdrawal of his men to a new defensive perimeter. Shortly afterwards, while crossing the road at the bridge, he was mortally wounded. His VC citation concluded: "Over three days, Lieutenant Grayburn led his men with supreme gallantry and determination. Although in pain and weakened by his wounds... his courage never flagged. There is no doubt that, had it not been for this officer's inspiring leadership and personal bravery, the Arnhem bridge could never have been held for this time."

**"THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT, HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR THIS OFFICER'S
INSPIRING LEADERSHIP AND PERSONAL BRAVERY, THE ARNHEM
BRIDGE COULD NEVER HAVE BEEN HELD FOR THIS TIME"**



Above: Lieutenant John Grayburn VC



Above: Four men of the 1st Parachute Battalion take cover in a shell hole outside Arnhem



"WE WERE CONSTANTLY ON THE MOVE, IT WAS VERY RARE THAT YOU STAYED ANYWHERE FOR EIGHT OR NINE HOURS BECAUSE MOVEMENT WAS A GOOD WAY TO STAY ALIVE"

the way and were discarded." As Frost's men got to the bridge, this unintentionally proved to be a terrible hindrance to the paratroopers behind. "Johnny Frost got there first, the trouble started then because the Germans knew where we were going. They were putting men, arms and tanks from Germany into Arnhem. We were blocked off."

Despite this, the Dutch were pleased to see the British. "Although our objective was Arnhem, we had to get to Oosterbeek first and it was quite a trek carrying all equipment and running. The people in the villages would come out and give you milk and oranges and say thank you. They thought the war was over."

Sadly, the war was about to hit home: "We couldn't get to the bridge. Some sappers were sent to lay mines around the approach roads so we came back to Oosterbeek. We were moved into woods and did patrols into the farmhouses." The objectives had changed, and they now had to try to punch the Germans to reach the paratroopers at Arnhem Bridge. Oosterbeek is a village 4.8 kilometres west of Arnhem and situated on the north bank of the Rhine. The commander of the 1st Airborne Division, Major-General Roy Urquhart, set up

a temporary headquarters at the Hartenstein Hotel to try to direct operations.

Chaos at Oosterbeek

Like the men at the bridge, the paratroopers at Oosterbeek found themselves increasingly cut off and surrounded. The RAF tried to constantly resupply the lightly armed troops, but due to the lack of radio communication, the aircraft delivered their payloads onto German positions.

Hicks described the unsuccessful drops as, "...heartbreaking. By this time we were heavily involved in fighting and we needed supplies but the only way we could get them was by Dakotas. They didn't know the Germans had captured the prearranged drop zones so here were these Dakotas flying very low at 250 metres. You could see their doors wide open and the boys were throwing baskets of ammunition out. The Germans were having the time of their life, they could shoot them down like flies."

Hicks remembers one drop well: "A particular aircraft came across and caught fire from anti-aircraft guns. The boys in there ignored the flames and threw these baskets out. Once this had been done, he could have gone home but he turned around, came back and did it again. We were shouting needlessly, 'don't come, Jerry will get you' but this time he was shot down and killed." The pilot, Flight Lieutenant David Lord, was awarded the VC.

Incoming German mortar fire onto British positions at Oosterbeek was now intense. "We got it more and more. The Germans loved mortars and they could lay back and plaster you. We had no chance, running and jumping out the way was what we had to do. In the daytime, they used to fire mortars and airbursts, which used to

hit the trees so we'd need good head cover, but the only cover we had were bits of foliage."

By 19 September, Urquhart realised that his men at Oosterbeek could not reach the bridge. He took the decision to form a defensive perimeter, which could be held until the armoured divisions of XXX Corps arrived.

Within the horseshoe-shaped defence were paratroopers, glider pilots, pioneers, artillerymen, infantrymen and mechanics. After the paratroopers at the bridge capitulated on 20 September, Oosterbeek became the British front line. Conditions were grim: "Sleep wasn't available. The centre was the Hartenstein Hotel, which was on a main road, so the Germans knew if they fired down on that area they were going to get somebody. We were always on the move, it was very rare that you stayed anywhere for eight or nine hours because movement was a good way to stay alive."

During the battle, Hicks was wounded several times. "In Africa and Sicily they called me 'Lucky Hickey' because I never got wounded. Arnhem was different because I was wounded three times and my friends joked, 'Don't go near Hickey, he's a death trap'."

Hicks received his first wound from a German shell. "There was a big bang and we all came downstairs. We were shook up and my right wrist was painful and swelling. I had to just wrap it up and think, 'Ah well, it'll get better.'" His subsequent injuries were both in the same location: "My second wound was when a sniper took a piece out of my neck and, two days after that, I got hit in the neck again under heavy mortar fire."

Despite these incidents, Hicks remained hopeful about the battle's progress. "We knew it was going to be harder than we thought, but there was no doubt that we were going to win. Each time we heard a car or lorry we'd say, 'The [British] tanks are coming'. Of course the only tanks that came were German." On 21 September, the perimeter was even shelled by XXX Corps. "They were firing on the other side of the river as the Germans were advancing into the woods, if the guns could keep up a barrage, it could hold them back while our lads got away. We weren't at all resentful and we'd say, 'Come on lads, give them stick'."

By 22 September, the Germans tried to taunt the men in the perimeter into surrendering via a Tannoy. "They had a truck in the woods. They said all sorts of rubbish like, 'We've given you



Left: The grave of an unknown British soldier at Arnhem, photographed shortly after the city's liberation in 1945

Top: British POWs captured during the battle. More than 6,500 soldiers were taken prisoner during the operation



Arnhem Bridge after the British paratroopers had been overrun. There are destroyed buildings on the right



A German SS SdKfz 250 half-track in action at Oosterbeek. Note the supply parachute in the background

a good time, you fought well'. They would play *Pistol Packin' Mama* with the line 'Lay that pistol down lads, lay that pistol down'. There was an explosion, then we didn't hear it anymore. It was likely a British lad who blew it up."

Among the wounded

In the days afterwards, the situation became more desperate. "Our food was gone and we were taking ammunition off our friends who had been killed. We knew now that things were bad because we'd been there six or seven days and there was no mention of being relieved."

Due to his wounds, Hicks couldn't continue fighting and he was driven to an improvised hospital. "The doctors were amputating and trying to save lives. Outside the Hartenstein Hotel, there were 50-60 men all wrapped up in blankets who were beyond help."

Hicks was resigned to likely being captured. "We knew our chances of being taken prisoner were about 80 per cent, because when you're miles from the lines, the Germans were not going to let you get away with it." The hospital itself was nightmarish. "I was in a house near Sonneburg Castle, which had big Red Cross flags outside. I was put in a corner. Half the roof had gone, the kitchen table was used for operating and the padres were going round saying prayers. I sat there full of misery."

During the night, Hicks was next to a wounded SS officer who kept asking for water. "I gave him a few drops and all night he was holding my hand. There was a hell of a bombardment, it wasn't very hopeful."

In the morning of 26 September, nine days after they had arrived, those left in the Oosterbeek Perimeter were taken prisoner. When a German staff car pulled up outside the hospital, Hicks noticed a high ranking officer,

"WE WERE WAITING FOR THEM. THE GUARDS, TANKS, EVERYTHING WE NEEDED WAS THERE BUT THEY COULDN'T GET THROUGH. WE KNEW THEN THAT WE'D HAD IT"

"He had a big baton under his arm and wore a big black coat. He was a typical SS officer, wearing glasses and with eyes you could cut glass with." The officer stood above Hicks and asked the wounded German if he had been treated well. "He replied, 'Great' and turned to me saying, 'My comrade gave me the last of his water.' I didn't want to look at this officer but he said, 'Thank you, Tommy, for you the war is over'. He then put his baton under his arm, shook my hand and said, 'Good luck'."

A brave and determined stand

By 25 September, the British had accepted the operation could not succeed, and the 1st Airborne Division was given the order to withdraw. The crux of the mission had been the battle for Arnhem and the losses were heavy.

Of the approximately 10,600 Allied soldiers, only 2,398 returned. About 1,500 were killed and the rest, including Hicks and Morgan, were captured. Conservative figures estimate German casualties of at least 3,300. The reasons for the Allied defeat have been heavily debated. Hicks says, "I think one of the worst things was that 21st Army Group took too long. They couldn't expect us to run 12 kilometres

and hold a bridge in the middle of a German army. We were waiting for them. The guards, tanks, everything we needed was there but they couldn't get through. We knew then that we'd had it." Morgan's opinion is succinct: "We dropped too close to two German Panzer divisions. We only had half a dozen six-pounder anti-tank guns against many enemy tanks."

What is not in question is the extreme courage of the Allied soldiers. It was reckoned that, even in its complete state, 1st Airborne Division would only be able to hold out around Arnhem for four days. Instead, despite depleted numbers, communication problems and being deprived of sleep, food, water, medicine and ammunition, the men held on for nine days in some cases and did not withdraw in defeat. In that sense, it is one of the bravest and most determined stands in modern military history. Morgan is clear on how hard paratroopers like himself fought. "A film was later made called *A Bridge Too Far*, but how could it have been too far when I was there for days? It wasn't too far for me."

In terms of Arnhem's legacy, Hicks, despite his experiences, is generous. "To me, my friends and the Dutch, of course we thought it was worth the risk. If anyone had asked, we would have done it again because that was the kind of unit we were in. You did these things because you wanted to."

FURTHER READING


- ★ CAPTURED AT ARNHEM: FROM RAILWAYMAN TO PARATROOPER BY NORMAN HICKS, 2013
- ★ ARNHEM: BATTLE FOR SURVIVAL BY JOHN NICHOL AND TONY RENNEL (2012)

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Great Battles

IVRY

WORDS MARC DESANTIS

Protestant Huguenots and Catholics battle desperately for the future of the Kingdom of France

This painting by Charles de Steuben shows Henry IV encouraging his troops forward – note his famous white plumed helmet

NORTHERN FRANCE, MARCH 1590

France in the 16th century was gradually developing from a disjointed Medieval kingdom into a fully fledged nation-state. The Protestant Reformation had established itself elsewhere across Europe – especially in Germany – but it had not made much headway into France until the emergence of Calvinism.

Based in Geneva, the Calvinists sent missionary preachers to France, where they founded churches among their new adherents. The Huguenots, as these Calvinist Protestants came to be called, were always a minority of perhaps ten per cent among the French, who by and large remained resolutely Catholic. Though Huguenots might have been found everywhere in the country, their main concentrations were in the far south and in the region of La Rochelle on the Atlantic coast.

The early Calvinists were critical of Roman Catholicism, and many adherents considered mass to be sinful, and the images that were found everywhere in Catholic churches to be idolatrous. Royal officials began to persecute the Calvinists as a threat to the traditional order. One area where Calvinism enjoyed great success was in the Kingdom of Navarre in the south west of France, where Antoine de Bourbon reigned. Though Antoine was himself ambivalent about Protestantism, his wife and queen, Jeanne d'Albret, was a fervent Calvinist.

Henry of Navarre

Into this world of split religious allegiances came Henry, born in December 1553. Growing up in Pau, the capital city of Navarre, in the province of Béarn, the young prince of the House of Bourbon impressed his elders with his keen intelligence. When Henry was six, he went to live in the royal court in Paris, where he developed a love of Plutarch and other ancient authors. In 1564, Catherine de Medici, the queen regent of France and widow of King Henry II, took Henry along with her on a grand tour of France that she made with her own young son King Charles IX.

The religious civil wars that would engulf France for nearly 40 years had broken out into full scale fighting in 1562. At Dreux, a royal (Catholic) army defeated a Huguenot force in a battle that was especially costly to both sides. The heavy toll in lives did much to encourage the warring factions to do their best to avoid fighting pitched battles in the future. It did not, however, bring an end to the fighting. A series of wars would be fought between the rival religious factions between 1562 and 1598.

Henry's father Antoine had died from a wound he took in the Siege of Rouen in 1562, and his mother, Jeanne, still as strongly Calvinist as ever, came to Paris in 1566 where she was reunited with her son. They returned to Navarre in 1567 and Henry, though just a youngster of 13, became recognised as a leader of the Huguenot party in France. That same year, a conspiracy by the Huguenots to seize the king and the rest of the royal court while it was at Montceaux failed, and was followed by a Huguenot blockade of Paris.

“FIGHTING ON HORSEBACK WITH SWORD AND LANCE, OUTFITTED IN PLATE ARMOUR, WAS THE MOST HONOURABLE MODE OF WARFARE”

This third of the religious wars was brought to a close with the Peace of Saint-Germain in 1570, which granted the Huguenots certain liberties. A pattern was set in which fighting would begin, concessions would be made allowing the Calvinists religious freedoms in certain towns, followed by recurrences of outright warfare. In an attempt to heal the factional breach, Catherine arranged for her daughter Marguerite marry to Henry on 18 August 1572, but this was followed just days later by the Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre, which began overnight on 23-24 August. Thousands of Huguenots were slain in Paris by Catholic mobs, and Henry was given a stark choice: abjure his Protestantism and accept Catholicism, or die. Henry chose to live, and for several years lived outwardly as a Catholic prince at the royal court.

In May 1574, Charles IX died, and his brother, Henry III, took his place on the throne. Henry was unpopular, displaying a number of personal eccentricities and showing extreme favouritism to a chosen few. Even his deep religiosity won him little regard, as he took part in Catholic rites as if he were a mere commoner. Such un-regal acts, despite their piety, did not endear him to his people. In 1576, Henry of Navarre managed to escape from Henry III's court, and resumed his life in Navarre as a Huguenot champion.

The eighth and final war of religion began in 1585. Henry III sat uneasily on the throne amid a three-way, kingdom-wide civil war. He and his royal forces were caught between the stiffly intransigent Huguenots and the fervently anti-Protestant Catholic League, which was led by yet another Henry, the powerful Duke of Guise.

As the champion of the French Catholics, Guise was receiving substantial financing for the League from King Philip II of Spain, the most dedicated Catholic monarch in Europe. Since Henry III was childless, Guise sought at all costs to prevent Henry of Navarre, who was next in line for the throne as the eldest male descendant of King Louis IX and first prince of the blood, from ever becoming king.

In January 1589, Henry III had Guise treacherously assassinated, but this infuriated and energised the rest of the Catholic League, who made rapid gains against the king. He now desperately sought the support of the same Huguenots who he had been trying to suppress for some time. The staunchly Catholic city of Paris was under the control of the Catholic League, and the king needed Henry's aid in getting it back. Together, they began a siege of the capital.

The king declared Henry to be his heir, and not long afterward, in August 1589, Henry III, the last of the Valois royal line, was himself slain by an assassin's blade. Henry

was thus named king as Henry IV despite his Protestantism. Henry's claim was fiercely opposed by the Catholic League, as well as the population of France, which at the time was 90 per cent Catholic.

War in the age of Henry IV

By the early-16th century, infantry had regained much of the prominence in battle that it had lost after the fall of Rome 11 centuries previous. Operating in large squares, pikemen would fend off enemy cavalry with their long weapons, while the arquebusiers interspersed among them blasted them with lead shot. The arquebusiers would then retreat into the safety of the pike square while they reloaded. Horsemen still retained their role as shock cavalry, one that had existed since the era of Medieval knighthood.

For typical French aristocrats, serving as gendarmes was part of their ancient heritage. Fighting on horseback with sword and lance, outfitted in plate armour, was the most honourable mode of warfare. Their ostentatious appearance was also in line with what one might expect of aristocratic mounted warriors, covetous of individual glory. One observer, writing of the noble horseman right before the Battle of Coutras in 1587, said that they were, "...the cavalry the most covered with tinsel and gold that had ever been seen in France."

Other European armies had begun to supplement their armoured lancers with the reiter, a more practical kind of light cavalryman armed with a pistol and a sabre. Typical reiter tactics involved galloping up to the enemy, firing their pistols and then returning to the rear ranks of the formation to reload, while succeeding

"THOUSANDS OF HUGUENOTS WERE SLAIN IN PARIS BY CATHOLIC MOBS, AND HENRY WAS GIVEN A STARK CHOICE: ABJURE HIS PROTESTANTISM AND ACCEPT CATHOLICISM, OR DIE"

Henry IV's forces fought fiercely against the numerically superior Catholic League. Timely reinforcements from England helped win the battle

OPPOSING FORCES



THE ROYALISTS

LEADER

King Henry IV

CAVALRY

3,000

INFANTRY

8,000

vs



CATHOLIC LEAGUE

LEADER

Charles, Duke of Mayenne

CAVALRY

4,000

INFANTRY

15,000

ranks did the same. This caracole, as it was called, was not altogether decisive, as it usually only worked once one side saw that it was losing and beat a hasty retreat. That could take a while to bring about. Henry would make his mark by introducing a twist to reiter tactics. In his pistolade, he would have his troopers fire their pistols just once and then charge straight into hand-to-hand combat with their sabres, instead of performing the time-consuming caracole.

Though incontestably a brave and dashing man, Henry did not make the perfect general. While he was leading his cavalry, he could not remain behind his lines to oversee the entirety of the battle. As a strategist, he was also hampered by his own libidinous nature. Henry was, to put it mildly, an enthusiastic philanderer, and over the course of his life he had many mistresses. Henry was so besotted with one such woman, the lovely Corisande d'Andoins, that instead of immediately following

up on his great victory at Coutras, he instead rode off to Béarn to see her, where he laid 22 captured enemy standards at her feet. His chief follower, the Huguenot Duke of Sully, would later write in justified disgust that "...all the advantage of so famous a victory floated away like smoke on the wind."

The duel for France

Having become king, Henry was in an odd and dangerous position. The greater part of France was against him, but there were many Catholic nobles willing to follow him, more for his reputation as a good soldier and his amiable nature than out of religious feeling. The vigorous Henry was certainly a stark contrast to the feckless Henry III. He thus had to balance a fractious coalition composed of his old Huguenot supporters and the new Catholic adherents, whose support he would need if he were ever actually to sit on his throne. Some, however, would not be reconciled to a Protestant monarch, and these men left the royal court for their own domains.

The royal army of 40,000 men, which was now Henry's own, dwindled quickly to just 18,000 and he was forced to give up the siege of Paris. There were some who wanted him to go back to the Huguenot stronghold in the south of France, but others cautioned against so defensive a move. "Who will believe that you are the king of France," asked one, "when he sees your edicts date from Limoges?" Winning the throne in fact rather than just theory would require a more aggressive strategy.

The Duke of Mayenne, while enemies with Henry IV for many years, was the man to make peace in 1596

Henry next moved north into Normandy, seeking to open a line of communications with England, which was itself Protestant and ruled by its formidable queen, Elizabeth I, who had sent considerable aid to Henry in the form of £200,000 and some 70,000 pounds of gunpowder, ammunition, and other supplies. In August 1589, he captured the port city of Dieppe and began to fortify it.

In September, he was pursued north by Charles, Duke of Mayenne, the younger brother of the murdered Henry, Duke of Guise, who was now the leader of the Catholic League's forces. Mayenne's army was big and powerful, composed of League troops, Swiss and Landsknecht mercenaries and Spanish troops detached from the Army of Flanders in the Netherlands. All told, Mayenne

"Now glory to the Lord of Hosts, from whom all glories are! And glory to our Sovereign Liege, King Henry of Navarre." These are first two lines of Thomas Macaulay's poem on the battle



GREAT BATTLES

had some 20,000 infantry and 4,000 cavalry under his command. Seeing the strength of the fortifications that Henry had thrown up, Mayenne chose to advance along a defile, past the village of Arques, towards Dieppe. Henry had fortified this approach with two trench lines to be manned by his much smaller army of 8,000. On the foggy morning of 21 September, Mayenne advanced along the road into the narrowed space of the defile, thereby ceding the advantage that his more numerous force should have enjoyed.

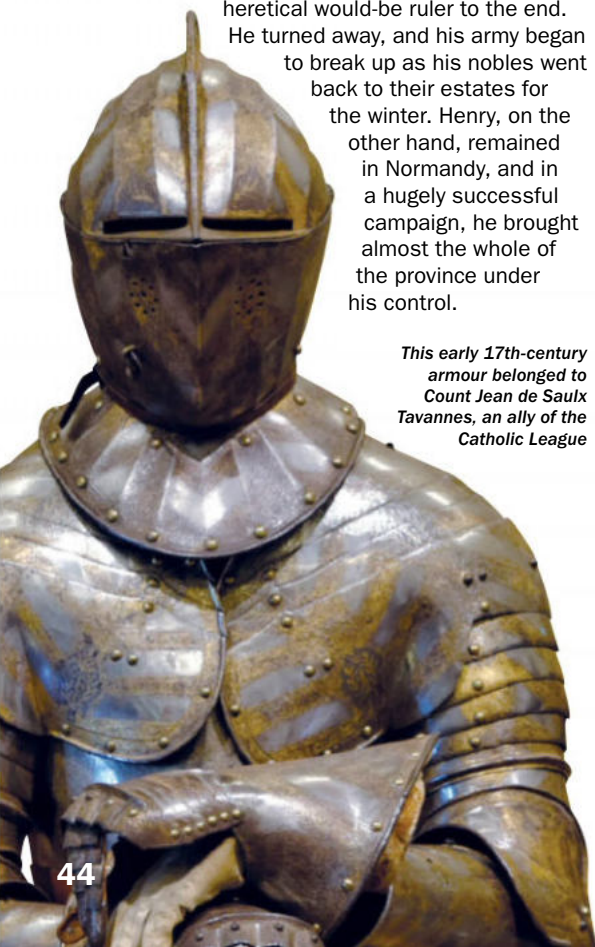
A unit of German mercenary infantry turned the flank of the first trench and Henry's men retreated in disorder towards the second line. Mayenne's cavalry now charged through the gaps in the trench line. With his battle line crumbling, Henry in desperation shouted to any who could hear: "Are there not 50 gentlemen of France who will come and die with their king?"

At the head of his small force of just 1,000 reiters cavalry, Henry counterattacked the League horsemen in the tight confines of the defile, while his arquebusiers fired into their close-packed ranks. The outcome was in doubt for more than an hour, as the cavalry of each side charged and counter-charged, with the League advance barely halted by the Swiss infantry of Henry's second line. But when the thick fog lifted, the cannon of the nearby castle of Arques fired on the Leaguers, who recoiled in haste out of range of the artillery.

The Battle of Arques was not particularly costly for either side – Mayenne lost just 600 men and Henry 200. Finding no way to get at Dieppe with Henry present, and with a royalist army approaching, Mayenne withdrew on 6 October. In addition to these reinforcements, Elizabeth I also sent Henry troops, and he mounted an attack on Paris on 1 November. Henry's raid failed, as the city had been given a strong garrison and was inhabited by a fiercely Catholic populace, determined to resist the heretical would-be ruler to the end.

He turned away, and his army began to break up as his nobles went back to their estates for the winter. Henry, on the other hand, remained in Normandy, and in a hugely successful campaign, he brought almost the whole of the province under his control.

This early 17th-century armour belonged to Count Jean de Saulx Tavannes, an ally of the Catholic League



02 MAYENNE MOVES UP

The army of the Catholic League, 4,000 cavalry and 15,000 infantry, under the command of the Duke of Mayenne forms up opposite it. Mayenne's army contains a strong contingent of heavy armoured lancers.

01 HENRY DEPLOYS

Henry's royalist army of 3,000 horse and 8,000 foot establishes its line on the plain of Saint André running from Ivry to Nonacourt. Henry's cavalymen are grouped in six blocks, with each flanked by regiments of infantry.

06 CARACOLE CHAOS

While performing the caracole, League light cavalry loses its commander and retreats to the rear of their line. As they do so, they get in the way of Mayenne's charging lancers, who are forced to come to a halt.

07 LEAGUE CAVALRY RETREATS

Henry now charges Mayenne's immobilised cavalry and cleaves his way through them. Split asunder, the League cavalry flees from the field, which now belongs to Henry.

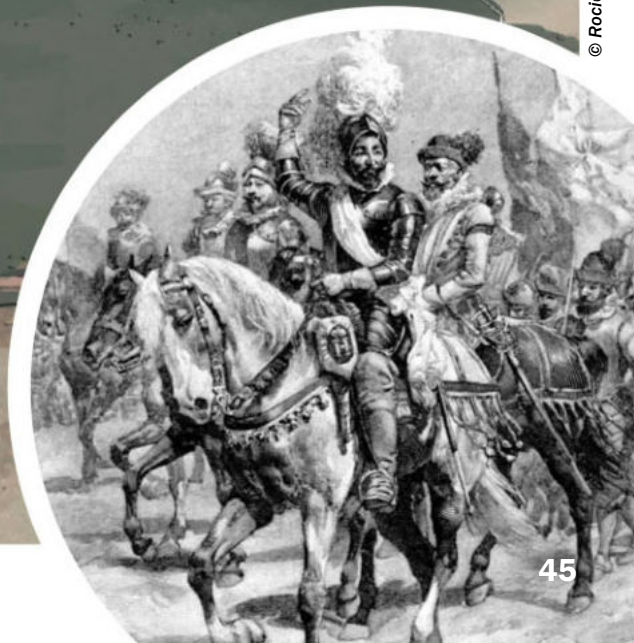
08 BLOODY PURSUIT

In the ensuing rout, the surrenders of French and Swiss troops are accepted, but the foreign soldiers in service with the League are hacked down without quarter.

05 THE REITERS ATTACK

On the royalist right, Schomberg's mercenary reiters fight Duke Aumale's cavalry. Supported by Marshal Biron and the royalist reserve, Aumale's horsemen are routed.

Henry's prowess on the battlefield allowed him to bring the Wars of Religion to a close, something which has endeared him to generations





“SEEING THAT HE COULD NEVER BECOME KING WHILE HE REMAINED A PROTESTANT, IN 1593 HE MADE THE STARTLING BUT VERY PRAGMATIC DECISION TO CONVERT TO CATHOLICISM, AND WAS THEREAFTER RECOGNISED AS THE TRUE KING OF FRANCE”

Battle is joined

In March 1590, Mayenne rode north again to bring Henry – who was himself besieging Dreux – to battle. The king was determined to fight a pitched battle, a rarity during the religious wars, and wanted a decision, as he was not as outnumbered as at Arques. His English troops had already departed, but he had some 3,000 cavalry and 8,000 infantry at his command. The Catholic League army was smaller than it had been at Arques, totalling about 4,000 cavalry and 15,000 infantry. Of Henry's royalist army, many were foreign troops, including redoubtable Swiss infantry and a regiment of German mercenary reiters.

On 14 March, Henry's main army was arrayed for battle on the plain of Saint André between the towns of Ivry and Nonancourt. As this was open ground, neither Henry nor the Leaguers would have the benefit of fighting a defensive battle. It would be a straightforward engagement between two armies. Henry's plan was to destroy the Leaguers' left wing opposite him with his elite troops and he would, as always, lead the attack in person.

Reliance on mercenaries put Henry in an awkward position. Just before the start of the battle, the colonel of the German reiters, a man called Dietrich Schomberg, approached the king and requested that he pay his men's arrears in full. Henry, with the upcoming battle weighing heavily on his mind, caustically replied that a brave man would never ask for his money right before a battle. Afterwards, Henry quickly regretted his sharp answer and later asked for Schomberg's forgiveness, which was enough

to bring the German to tears and elicit his firm insistence of his loyalty to Henry.

Henry stopped to pray with his men before the battle commenced. He then added advice on how to conduct the battle. “My comrades,” he said, “I mean to conquer or die with you. Keep your ranks I beg of you. Should the heat of combat make you fall out, remember to close up at once – that is how battles are won. You must charge between those trees on the right and should you lose sight of ensign, standard or pennon, do not lose sight of my white plume – you will always find it on the road to honour and victory.”

Henry's army was deployed in some six corps. He had placed a unit of 300 cavalry under the Marshal d'Aumont on the far left of his line with two regiments of infantry on its flanks. Next to them was a regiment of cavalry under Duke Montpensier, with Swiss pikemen and half of a regiment of French arquebusiers on its right. On its left was a regiment of 400 German landsknechts. Two groups of light cavalry, totalling 400 horse, under the Bastard of Angoulême and the Sieur de Givry formed the third corps. Set next to these units was the tiny royal artillery park of just five guns.

Moving rightward, next to this was a regiment of pistolier cavalry under the Baron de Biron, the son of the Armand, the Marshal Biron. These men were matched with a regiment of 800 picked infantry. The fifth corps – Henry's strongest and under his direct command – was composed of his best cavalry, four regiments of his Swiss mercenaries and three of his French infantry. As noted, he intended to break

the enemy line with these troops, and Henry had weighted his best men on his right wing. Anchoring the far right wing on the village of Saint André, was Schomberg's regiment of reiters. Behind the main line, forming a meagre reserve, were a small body of 150 cavalry and two regiments of infantry under the command of the Marshal Biron. Some skirmishers were also set ahead of the main line.

The Catholic League army was itself just as formidable, and larger too. The pre-battle dispositions of Mayenne's troops are not as clear as those of Henry, but as best as can be reconstructed. On the far right wing, light cavalry and heavy cavalry were reinforced by landsknechts and Swiss foot under Charles, Duke of Nemours. Walloon lancer cavalry, despatched by the Duke of Parma, commander of the Spanish Army of Flanders, to aid the Catholic cause, came next, supported by some French foot. These were under the command of Philip of Egmont. Beside these was the League artillery. Next to the guns was a regiment of reiters commanded by Eric of Brunswick. These were backed up by Swiss and French infantry. Next to the reiters were 700 lancers under Mayenne's direct command, and beside them, 400 mounted Spanish arquebusiers. Forming the far left of the League's line was a contingent of French cavalry under Charles, Duke of Aumale. These were supported by Walloon and French infantry.

The battle commenced as the armies marched towards each other warily, with Henry moving his army to the left to attain the advantage of the sun and the wind. The bigger



Henry IV is depicted here entering Paris in 1594, some four years after his great victory at Ivry

of the League army's line extended further than either wing of the royalists, and it was probably Mayenne's intention to outflank Henry's army on both sides.

When they were close enough, Henry ordered his artillery commander, an officer named de Guiche, to open up on the Leaguers. De Guiche's gunnery was effective, mowing down numerous Walloon lancers and reiters to his fore. Mayenne's artillery was less so, killing only one of Henry's soldiers. After this short barrage, the cavalry of both sides charged in order to lessen their time under fire. The royalist cavalry, under Marshal d'Aumont, drove off the Catholic light cavalry opposite them. Montpensier's troops clashed with those of Nemours, and Egmont's Walloon lancers then charged the royalist light cavalry of the Bastard of Angoulême and the Sieur de Givry and routed them. Egmont then fell upon de Guiche's artillerists and slaughtered them. The Walloons were out of formation after all of this action, and were struck by the Baron de Biron's

“THE HORSE-ARQUEBUSIERS PERFORMED WELL, SHOOTING DEAD HENRY’S ENSIGN BEARER AND LEAVING MANY AFRAID THAT HENRY HAD HIMSELF BEEN SLAIN”

Though Ivry was a turning point in the Wars of Religion, Henry IV would not secure the throne until four years later



pistolier cavalymen. The Walloons broke, and then rallied and reentered the fray. They were all but destroyed in the ensuing combat, and the few survivors found safety behind the Leaguers' main line.

On the right wing of Henry's army, Schomberg's mercenaries engaged in a furious combat with those of Aumale, and Schomberg was slain in the fighting. The scales were only tipped in favour of the royalists when Marshal Biron entered the fray with his reserve troops and defeated the Aumale's League cavalry.

The decisive fight would take place in the centre. Mayenne struck against the centre-left of Henry's line with his reiters on his right flank, his Spanish horse-arquebusiers on his left flank, and his lancers in the middle.

The horse-arquebusiers performed well, shooting dead Henry's ensign bearer and leaving many afraid that Henry had himself been slain. But the League reiters, in the midst of performing their caracole, were hit hard by Henry's artillery, and then were shot up by some skirmishing arquebusiers, who they did not spot until it was too late. Their commander, Eric of Brunswick, was killed and after firing their pistols, instead of completing the caracole and firing again, simply rode back to the League rear.

In their flight, they got in the way of Mayenne's lancers and the duke was forced to halt his charge while they passed. This left them very vulnerable to the charge of the royalist horsemen, with the very much alive Henry at their head. Henry's cavalry dispersed the Spanish and then struck Mayenne's stationary horsemen.

Lances were useless when not being used in the charge, and these were tossed aside by the Leaguers in favour of swords for close quarters action. 15 minutes of gory battle ensued until Henry hacked his way through the enemy at the head of his horse troopers. Mayenne's cavalry were put to flight, and sought the security of the rear of their line. The French and Swiss League troops were given quarter, but for the foreign troops, the landsknechts and the Walloons, there would be no such mercy. Many of these ran for safety but were cut down in the vengeful royalist pursuit. Losses to the Catholic League forces stood at 800 cavalry

and 3,000 infantry, and several thousand men soon became prisoners. The latter were mainly the hapless foreign footsoldiers, as the battle had an almost exclusive cavalry engagement with the infantry taking little part in the action. Henry's losses were much lighter, placed at some 500 killed in action.

Aftermath

Ivry was a clear-cut victory for Henry. With the battle won, and the League army annihilated, the king dithered. Paris was only 56 kilometres away and only by holding the capital could he ever be king in fact rather than just in title. Yet it was not until the middle of May that he once more moved against it, and Catholic Paris was ferocious in its opposition to the Huguenot. He tried to capture it, but the embattled city was stoutly defended.

To forestall the prospect of a Protestant monarch ruling France, Philip II despatched his redoubtable commander in the Netherlands, the Duke of Parma, to march to the relief of the starving city and lift Henry's siege. Parma opened up a supply route into Paris, and Henry was forced to give up any hope of taking the city. Seeing that he could never become king while he remained a Protestant, in 1593 Henry made the startling but very pragmatic decision to convert to Catholicism, and was thereafter recognised as the true king of France.

Even after his politic conversion to Catholicism, there remained much fighting for Henry to do. The religious wars in France did not come to an end until 1598, with the promulgation of the Edict of Nantes, which allowed Protestant worship to the Huguenots in select places in France. Henry, the first of the Bourbon kings, would thereafter try to reintegrate the Huguenots back into the larger Catholic kingdom that was now his.

FURTHER READING

- ★ THE FRENCH WARS OF RELIGION, BY MACK P. HOLT
- ★ EARLY MODERN FRANCE 1560-1715 BY ROBIN BRIGGS
- ★ REFORMATION: EUROPE'S HOUSE DIVIDED 1490-1700 BY DIARMAID MACCULLOCH

KILLING HITLER'S HANGMAN

WORDS MICHAEL HASKEW

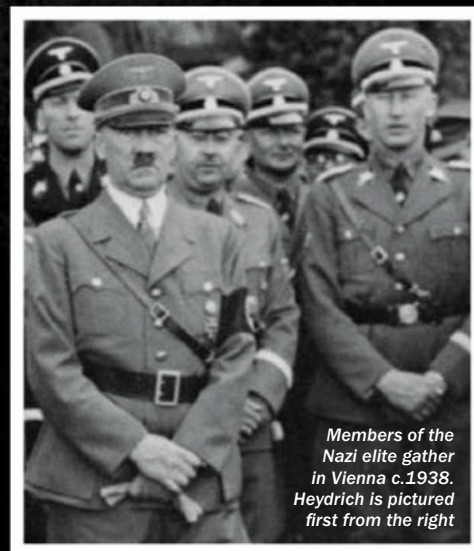
He was the embodiment of blonde, blue-eyed barbarism. If Hitler were the judge and his cadre of Nazi cronies the jury, then SS Obergruppenführer Reinhard Heydrich was the executioner. His own demise became the most high-profile assassination of World War II

In the spring of 1939, the German Army goose-stepped into the streets of the ancient city of Prague without firing a shot. Hitler had completed his conquest of the neighbouring state and next in his mind was the exploitation of the territory gained and the harnessing of Czech industry for the benefit of the German war machine.

Six months before the Führer plunged Europe into war, he divided the former Czechoslovakia into two Reich protectorates, Bohemia-Moravia and the Slovak Republic. To govern Bohemia-Moravia and implement his plan, Hitler installed Baron Konstantin von Neurath. Soon enough, however, von Neurath was judged as ineffective. Despite the fact that about one third of German arms and munitions were produced in Czech factories, productivity in the protectorate was not up to expectations. The people remained defiant, sometimes openly contemptuous of their Nazi oppressors.

By late 1941, it was time for a change and Heydrich was chosen to bring the Czech people to heel. Born in the German city of Halle on 17 March 1904, he was the son of musician and opera singer Bruno Richard Heydrich and Elisabeth Anna Maria Amalia Krantz. He was raised Roman Catholic, in a financially well-to-do, cultured family. He was educated in the finest schools, exhibited impeccable manners and was an accomplished pilot, fencer and violinist.

As a young man, Heydrich became involved with the right-wing Freikorps under the government of the post-World War I Weimar Republic and honed early anti-Semitic sentiments. He aspired to a career in the German Navy, however, while engaged to Lina von Osten, who he married in 1931, he was accused of having an affair with the daughter of a shipyard manager. The resulting scandal cost Heydrich his commission and he was forced to resign for 'conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman'.



Members of the Nazi elite gather in Vienna c.1938. Heydrich is pictured first from the right

**"THE DASHING YOUNG
OFFICER WHO CUT THE
FIGURE OF THE 'ARYAN
IDEAL' BECAME THE
ARCHITECT AND HEAD
OF THE SS SECURITY
APPARATUS, THE
SICHERHEITSDIENST"**

*Reichsprotektor of Bohemia and
Moravia, Reinhard Heydrich,
perhaps the most ruthless of all
Nazis, succumbed to wounds
inflicted by assassins*

Blonde ambition

Within months, Heydrich found renewed purpose, joining the Nazi Party and the SS. Subsequently, he enjoyed a meteoric rise to power. As deputy to Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler, leader of the SS, the dashing young officer who cut the figure of the 'Aryan ideal' became the architect and head of the SS security apparatus, the Sicherheitsdienst, or SD.

By the time Heydrich, newly appointed as acting reichsprotektor of Bohemia and Moravia, arrived in Prague to take charge in September 1941, he had compiled an impressive résumé. His hands were stained with the blood of the Night of the Long Knives, the 1934 purge of the SA (Stormtroopers); he was instrumental in the scandalous sex and smear campaigns that effectively ended the careers of Field Marshals Werner von Blomberg and Werner von Fritsch; he had worked tirelessly towards the annexation of both Austria and Czechoslovakia into the Third Reich; and he orchestrated the 'border incident' with Poland that led directly to the outbreak of war.

Ruthless, cold, and utterly devoid of conscience, Heydrich understood his role and set about the task of pacifying the Czechs with Teutonic efficiency. Approximately 5,000 leaders of the Czech resistance and members of the intelligentsia were swiftly rounded up, some of them summarily executed. Heydrich's new nickname, 'The Butcher of Prague,' was well earned.

As Czech newspapers published stories of the brutal Nazi crackdown, Heydrich implemented a policy he referred to as "whip and sugar." Workers were given ample food, and those who achieved production goals were rewarded, but the threat of severe punishment was always present. Industrial output soared, and the Czech government, under puppet President Emil Hachá, endorsed the growing compliance.

ASSASSINATION IN PRAGUE

REINHARD HEYDRICH'S ASSASSINS STALKED THEIR QUARRY FOR WEEKS PRIOR TO THE ATTACK, TRACKING HIS DAILY COMMUTE TO SS HEADQUARTERS IN PRAGUE

01 Heydrich's Prague home

The chateau of Panenské Brežany served as the home of the Heydrich family in Prague, his family remained there after the assassination. Located about 14 kilometres north of the city centre, it had previously belonged to Ferdinand Bloch-Bauer, a Jewish industrialist involved in the sugar industry.



03 Prague Castle

Also known as Hradčany Castle, this was the site of Heydrich's headquarters, and his destination on the morning of Gabčík and Kubiš's attack. The largest ancient fortification in the world, it had previously served the governments and kings of Bohemia, emperors of the Holy Roman Empire and presidents of Czechoslovakia.



CZERNIN PALACE

ARMY HEADQUARTERS

Heydrich was a keen athlete and is pictured here in his fencing uniform

**04** Scene of attack

Trained in assassination techniques by the British Special Operations Executive, Gabčík and Kubiš attacked the Mercedes 320 convertible carrying Heydrich to his office on the morning of 27 May 1942. The assassins chose the location because of a tight, 120-degree right turn that required the driver to slow the vehicle.

05 Bulovka Hospital

The gravely injured Heydrich was transported in the back of a truck to nearby Bulovka Hospital, where a trio of Czech doctors evaluated his condition and provided immediate medical care. A German surgeon later operated on the Reichsprotektor, but he eventually lapsed into a coma and died of blood poisoning.

REGIONAL SS HEADQUARTERS

PETSCHECK PALACE

REGIONAL SA HEADQUARTERS

02 Moravec safe house

The flat occupied by the Moravec family was a principal safe house in the Czech resistance network – Josef Gabčík and Jan Kubiš hid there on several occasions. Located in the Žizkov District of the city centre, its location is now by a plaque honouring the family's sacrifice.

06 Saint Cyril and Methodius

Betrayed by one of their own, the Czech agents made their last stand at the Church of Saint Cyril and Methodius in central Prague. SS troops surrounded the building and trapped the defiant men inside its crypt for several hours. Eventually, the Czechs committed suicide rather than surrender to the Nazis.



Meanwhile, Eduard Beneš, president of the Czechoslovak government-in-exile in London, watched with increasing alarm. Beneš realised that closer co-operation between the Nazis and the Czech people was hastening his country down the dark road to full assimilation into the Third Reich. Such co-operation was unthinkable.

Beneš concluded that a bold stroke was necessary. The assassination of a high-ranking Nazi would demonstrate to the Czech people that the resistance to Hitler remained viable. Britain and the United States would acknowledge the Czech commitment to the Allied cause, while the Germans would be shaken. Although the prospect of devastating reprisals against the Czech people was real, Beneš believed the risk was worth taking – and the obvious target was Reinhard Heydrich.

Operation Anthropoid

Beneš authorised a scheme codenamed Anthropoid. Fraught with peril, the mission was to involve a pair of soldiers of the Free Czechoslovak Army (FCA) in Britain, who were recruited specifically for the assassination. Trained by the British Special Operations Executive (SOE), the agents would be inserted by parachute near Prague and would operate completely independently.

Quietly, the search for a pair of intrepid and patriotic men produced two sergeants of the FCA, Josef Gabčík and Karel Svoboda, who

Right: The Mk II Sten Gun was easy to conceal, but prone to jamming



immediately volunteered, although neither was initially aware of Anthropoid's objective. The two undertook rigorous training at the SOE Special Training School in Scotland and Cholmondeley Castle in Cheshire, but Svoboda suffered a serious head injury and was replaced by another recruit, Jan Kubiš, resulting in frustrating delays.

Finally, on 28 December 1941, everything was ready. At Tempsford airfield in Bedfordshire, Gabčík and Kubiš boarded a Royal Air Force Handley-Page Halifax four-engine bomber of No 138 Squadron. Along with the would-be assassins, two teams of radio technicians assigned to communications and logistics missions were also to drop into Czechoslovakia that night.

Rather than radios, Gabčík and Kubiš carried weapons that the SOE considered well-suited to the task of killing at close quarter. They had been trained in the use of the 9mm Sten Gun – a cheaply produced submachine gun that was light and relatively small – and modified No 73 anti-tank grenades, which packed a

powerful 1.6 kilograms of explosives inside a fragmentation cylinder.

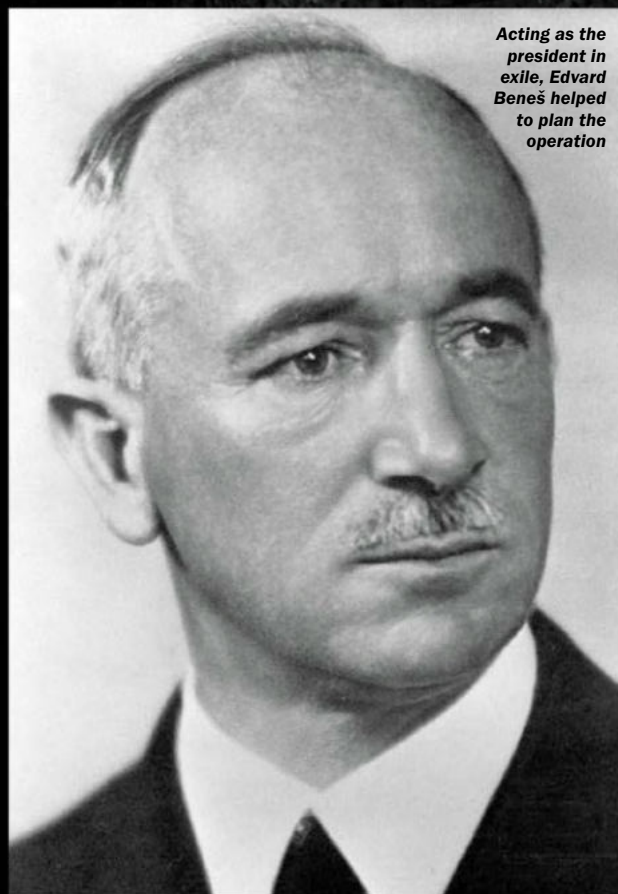
With Flight Lieutenant Ron Hockey at the controls, the Halifax roared down the runway into the night. The aircraft flew over France and across the German frontier. Above Darmstadt, Hockey had to dodge two Luftwaffe night fighters.

As the Halifax neared Czech airspace, the weather rapidly deteriorated. Heavy snow blanketed the countryside below, obscuring reference points that were counted on to identify the intended drop zone near the city of Pilsen. Just before 2.30am on 29 December, Gabčík and Kubiš jumped into the black sky. The pair descended earthward as the bomber droned on to drop the radio teams some distance away. The agents landed in an open field near the village of Nehvizdy, 20 kilometres from Prague and far from the expected drop zone.

Immediate problems

Gabčík and Kubiš ran into trouble from the moment they landed. They had no idea where

“ALTHOUGH THE PROSPECT OF DEVASTATING REPRISALS AGAINST THE CZECH PEOPLE WAS REAL, BENEŠ BELIEVED THE RISK WAS WORTH TAKING – AND THE OBVIOUS TARGET WAS REINHARD HEYDRICH”



Acting as the president in exile, Edvard Beneš helped to plan the operation



“Your Czechoslovak Ally” – Propaganda poster of Czechoslovak exile government in London



Heydrich and Karl Frank parade outside Prague Castle, January 1941

"FOUR DAYS AFTER PARACHUTING INTO THE PROTECTORATE, THEY WERE HANDED OVER TO RESISTANCE MEMBERS AND SMUGGLED INTO PRAGUE"

they were and Gabčík had seriously injured his left foot. They buried their parachutes and took shelter in an empty shed, storing the suitcases that held the tools of assassination. Gabčík leaned heavily on his fellow agent's shoulder as they laboured through the deep snow to an abandoned quarry. While they ate a cold meal and considered their options, a miller, aroused by the engines of the British bomber, had come out to see what the disturbance was about.

The friendly villager offered to put the two in touch with the local resistance and offered a temporary haven. Although they had been warned to avoid such contact, Gabčík and Kubiš determined that they had no choice. Four days after parachuting into the protectorate, they were handed over to resistance members and smuggled into Prague, where they received new papers to replace the obviously

bogus ones fabricated in Britain. Gabčík's foot required two months to heal, and during that time, the agents were shuttled regularly from one safe house to another. On several occasions, the agents stayed at the home of Marie Moravec and her 17-year-old son, Ata. The house was a centre of resistance activity and both men became close to the family.

Meanwhile, Beneš became increasingly concerned with the Anthropoid team. The government-in-exile had heard nothing since its departure in December. One of the radio teams that parachuted that night had disbanded immediately when its equipment was damaged during the drop. The other was operational and was ordered to find out what was happening.

Josef Valčík, a radio team member, was reunited with Gabčík and Kubiš in Prague and updated London. At the same time, it was becoming increasingly difficult to maintain the security of Operation Anthropoid. In March 1942, two more radio teams parachuted into the protectorate, both were hounded by the Gestapo, their members killed or dispersed. One refugee from these abortive teams was Sergeant Karel Curda, who later played a pivotal role in the Anthropoid endgame.

Stalking prey

With Gabčík again mobile, the assassins gathered intelligence on the Reichprotektor's daily routine. They tracked his movements

ANTHROPOID'S SOLDIERS

TRAINED IN THE ART OF ASSASSINATION AND WILLING TO FORFEIT THEIR LIVES, TWO SOLDIERS OF THE FREE CZECHOSLOVAK ARMY (FCA) WERE JOINED BY RESISTANCE COMRADES COMMITTED TO THE OPERATION



JAROSLAV SUSTR

A captain in the FCA, Sustr was largely responsible for training the Operation Anthropoid agents, in preparation for their mission. He also accompanied them aboard the aircraft that dropped them into the occupied Protectorate of Bohemia-Moravia.

Above: Captain Jaroslav Sustr was familiar with the area where the Anthropoid agents were to parachute, but heavy snow obscured the landscape



JOZEF GABČIK

A former locksmith from Slovakia, Gabčík was the triggerman in Operation Anthropoid. His cheaply made Sten Gun, nicknamed the 'Woolworth Gun', jammed and failed to fire when Gabčík was only a few feet away from Reinhard Heydrich's Mercedes convertible.

Above: Staff Sergeant Jozef Gabčík died in the crypt of the Church of Saint Cyril and Methodius, relentlessly hunted after the assassination of Heydrich



JAN KUBIŠ

The son of a Moravian peasant family, Kubiš hurled the Type 73 anti-tank grenade that inflicted the mortal wounds on Reinhard Heydrich. A staff sergeant in the FCA, Kubiš fled Czechoslovakia and had fought the Germans in France in the spring of 1940.

Above: Jan Kubiš was killed during the gun battle that erupted around the Church of Saint Cyril and Methodius on 18 June 1942



JOSEF VALČIK

Born in Valasské Klobouky, in the Zlín region of Moravia, Valčík was a member of an FCA radio team dropped into Bohemia-Moravia to set up communications links. Joining Operation Anthropoid, he signalled the approach of Heydrich's Mercedes with a handheld mirror.

Above: Josef Valčík committed suicide in the crypt of the Church of Saint Cyril and Methodius



ADOLF OPALKA

Born in Resice near the Austro-Hungarian border, Opalka parachuted into Bohemia-Moravia as leader of the group codenamed Out Distance. After his group was dropped in the wrong place and equipment was lost, he made his way to Prague and supported Operation Anthropoid.

Above: Severely wounded by shrapnel, 1st Lieutenant Adolf Opalka committed suicide in the Church of Saint Cyril and Methodius



KAREL CURDA

A traitor to his fellow Czechs, Curda received blood money from the Nazis for information that led to the deaths of the Operation Anthropoid conspirators. After the war, Curda was found guilty of treason and hanged on 29 April 1947.

Above: When asked about his treachery, Karel Curda replied, "I think you would have done the same for 1 million marks"



and learned his habits through resistance operatives and contact with members of Heydrich's own household staff. They watched the dark-green Mercedes convertible that commuted daily from Heydrich's home – a chateau in the Prague suburb of Panenské Brezany – to Hradčany Castle, where the black flag of the SS flew and the Reichsprotektor was surrounded by heavily armed guards. Heydrich's morning drive was made without escort, and it was decided that the best opportunity for success was to attack the car.

Heydrich's regular route presented one promising location for the assault. On a street named V Holesovickách, near the intersection with another road, Zenklova, and trolley stop number 14, the route descended towards a bridge across the Vltava River and made a hairpin, 120-degree right turn. Heydrich's driver would have to slow down and shift into a lower gear to negotiate the curve. At that moment, the Reichsprotektor would be most vulnerable.

Disguised as commuters waiting for the tram, Gabčík and Kubiš would take positions along the curb. Valčík and conspirator Adolf Opalka would occupy a vantage point on a hill about 100 meters away, using a mirror to signal the car's approach. At the right time, Gabčík would step into the street and fire his Sten Gun at near point-blank range. If necessary, Kubiš would step forward and toss the anti-tank grenades to finish the job.

“KUBIŠ RAN FORWARD AND THREW A GRENADE, WHICH EXPLODED BENEATH THE CAR'S RIGHT REAR WHEEL WELL. THE BLAST SHOWERED HEYDRICH AND KUBIŠ WITH SHRAPNEL”

Early on the morning of 27 May 1942, the assassins rode the trolley to the Prague suburb of Žizkov, where they borrowed bicycles, tied their suitcases to the handlebars and then pedalled to the ambush scene. As they waited nervously, Heydrich lingered. The Reichsprotektor played in the garden with his children for a few moments and spoke with his pregnant wife.

At 10am, Heydrich climbed into the front passenger seat of the big Mercedes and nodded to his driver, SS Technical Sergeant Klein. It was unusual for Heydrich to run late, and the Czech agents wondered if they should abort the mission. Around 10.30am, Valčík flashed the mirror warning.

The sleek green Mercedes rumbled into view, and as Klein shifted and applied the brake Gabčík whipped his Sten Gun from beneath his raincoat and pulled the trigger, but nothing happened. The gun had jammed. Astonished, Heydrich made a fatal mistake, ordering Klein to stop the car. He stood up, and tried to shoot the fleeing Gabčík with his pistol. Kubiš ran forward and threw a grenade, which exploded beneath the car's right rear wheel well. The

blast showered Heydrich and Kubiš with shrapnel. Windows in a nearby trolley car were shattered and two black SS uniform jackets were blown across overhead wires.

Bleeding profusely from wounds to his face, Kubiš mounted his bicycle and fired a shot into the air to scatter a group of bystanders caught along the street. Valčík and Opalka made good their escape as Gabčík ran for his bicycle but could not reach it because of the growing crowd. Heydrich's bullets whistled past him. Klein thought that the Reichsprotektor was unhurt and briefly chased Kubiš. When the driver raised his pistol to fire, however, he hit the magazine release and emptied the weapon by mistake, and so Kubiš slipped away.

Gabčík tossed his useless Sten Gun aside, sought the scant shelter of a telegraph pole, and then sprinted across the trolley tracks behind one of the cars. Apparently unaware of his wounds, Heydrich had stepped into the street and continued to fire at his assailant. Within seconds, he collapsed, blood spouting from his side. As Klein returned to the scene, Heydrich staggered to his feet and shrieked, “Get that Bastard!” Klein turned to chase



Above: Reinhard Heydrich's heavily damaged Mercedes 320 convertible sits abandoned, following the attack by Czech agents on 27 May 1942



Left: Jan Kubiš succumbed to his wounds during the gun fight with the SS



This memorial, located at Saints Cyril and Methodius church in Prague, commemorates the last stand of the men involved in Operation Anthropoid

AFTERMATH AT LIDICE-LEZAKY

IN REVENGE, THE NAZIS LAID WASTE TO THE TOWNS WITHOUT WARNING OR SYMPATHY

On the day of the lavish Nazi state funeral for SS Obergruppenführer and Reichsprotektor Reinhard Heydrich, the tiny Czechoslovakian village of Lidice suffered an agonising death. Without warning, SS troops descended on the cluster of homes and shops, 30 kilometres outside Prague at 9.30pm on 9 June 1942. The Germans supposedly believed the townspeople had provided support to the Czech agents who assassinated Heydrich.

Residents were forced from their homes at gunpoint. Mothers and their children were separated and then herded into a schoolhouse. More than 170 men were gathered in a barn, led outside in groups of ten, and executed. 26 more were burned alive inside another structure. 11 men returning from a shift at the local mine were shot. The women were sent to Ravensbruck concentration camp.

The children were either placed with SS families or shipped to the camp at Gneisenau.

Under orders from SS Obergruppenführer Karl Hermann Frank and Oberst-Gruppenführer Kurt Daluege, the soldiers razed Lidice, removing nearly 71,000 square metres of rubble and planting grain to cover the site.

Days later, a radio belonging to a Czech resistance group was found in the town of Lezaky. On 24 June, more than 500 SS troops swept up the inhabitants. All 33 adults were immediately shot. 11 of 13 children died in the gas chamber at the Chelmino concentration camp. Two girls, selected for 'Germanisation', survived the war and returned to their families. In December 1943, a group of 65 labourers removed the rubble of the homes in Lezaky. Today, memorials stand in their places.



Above: Stone memorials mark the former locations of homes in Lezaky. After the Nazis levelled the town, it was never rebuilt

“MORE THAN 170 MEN WERE GATHERED IN A BARN, LED OUTSIDE IN GROUPS OF TEN, AND EXECUTED”



Above: Taken before the SS cleared the rubble of Lidice, this stark photo of destruction revealed the brutality of the Nazis



Above: The bodies of men massacred at Horák's Farm in Lidice. This photo was confiscated from its owner by the Gestapo



Above: A sign displaying where the village of Lidice once stood. The sign is written in multiple languages, including British and French



This haunting memorial pays tribute to the lost children of Lidice, innocent victims of unspeakable Nazi cruelty after Heydrich's assassination

Gabcik, and Heydrich lurched a few steps before falling across the hood of the Mercedes.

The burly Klein chased Gabcik down a side street. The Czech ducked into a butcher shop only to be confronted with the owner, a Nazi sympathiser who yelled, "He's in here!" Klein huffed into the shop, and Gabcik shot him in both legs. The Czech dashed outside, and Klein handed his pistol to the butcher, who refused to continue the chase. Gabcik reached temporary safety.

Vigil and vengeance

A crowd of perplexed Czechs watched Heydrich writhe in the road, but no one came forward to render aid. Finally, a Czech woman yelled for help and an off duty policeman flagged down a passing van. The driver declined to get involved, so a second truck was stopped. Heydrich was assisted into the cab, but it was apparent that the ride to nearby Bulkova Hospital would be too painful. The wounded man was laid face down in the back on a filthy floor strewn with cans of floor polish.

Just after 11am, Heydrich reached the hospital, where Vladimir Snajdr, a Czech surgeon, and two other Czech doctors named Puhala and Slanina were first to render medical aid. Heydrich refused a shot of morphine and hissed that he wanted a German doctor.

Slanina assessed Heydrich's condition and noted later, "With a forceps and a few swabs, I tried to see the depth of the wound. I found pneumothorax, contusion of the lung and that the metal splinter, some three centimetres large, also transported pieces of upholstery through the diaphragm into his abdomen, causing damage the spleen and the tail of the pancreas."

"WHEN THE GERMANS PRESENTED THE SEVERED HEAD OF HIS MOTHER FLOATING IN A FISH TANK, THE TEENAGER FINALLY BROKE, IDENTIFYING THE CHURCH AS A POSSIBLE HIDING PLACE FOR THE ASSASSINS"

Further examination revealed that Heydrich's diaphragm was ruptured. Fragments of the car seat's horsehair stuffing were embedded in the wound. A German surgeon named Hohlbaum operated, removing the spleen and the crushed tip of the 11th rib and suturing the diaphragm.

The initial prognosis for the Reichsprotektor was good, and Himmler called the hospital hourly for updates on Heydrich's condition. The threats of infection, however, were real. Gangrene or septicaemia could seriously complicate the recovery. Within hours of the operation Heydrich developed a fever. Copious amounts of fluid drained continually from the wound for several days. However, by the morning of 2 June, the fever had ebbed and the drainage was slowing. It appeared that Heydrich was recovering. At midday on 3 June, he sat in bed eating a late breakfast and suddenly went into shock. Lapsing into a deep coma, he died at 4.30am the next morning. The likely cause of death was blood poisoning, although an unsubstantiated theory has suggested that the anti-tank grenade hurled by Kubiš contained some form of poison.

When news of Heydrich's death reached Berlin, Hitler flew into a rage, demanding the slaughter of 10,000 Czechs in retribution. Himmler ordered 100 Czech prisoners executed on the night of the attack. Out of chaos, a

concerted SS and Gestapo effort to find the assassins emerged. Karl Hermann Frank, a Sudeten Nazi and deputy of Heydrich, employed a campaign of 'selective terror' headed by SS Oberst-Gruppenführer Kurt Daluge. A reward of 10 million crowns was offered for information on the assassins' whereabouts, and it came with a warning that those who aided them would be executed, along with their families. Nearly 500 death sentences were swiftly carried out. During the sweep, a reported 13,000 Czechs were arrested and 36,000 homes were searched.

The pressure on Gabcik and Kubiš intensified rapidly. Shuffled from place to place as the Nazi cordon tightened, they were finally taken along with five other Czech agents to the Church of Saint Cyril and Methodius in central Prague. Vladimir Petrek, one of the ministers, had agreed to hide them in the crypt, but one of their number, turncoat Karel Curda, was missing.

Unnerved by the wave of terror that followed the assassination, Curda confessed that he had been an agent and also compromised several safe houses around the city. Among these was the home of Marie Moravec, who committed suicide with poison as Gestapo agents closed in on the morning of 17 June. Ata Moravec was dragged to Gestapo headquarters, forced to drink large amounts



Karl Hermann Frank was a Nazi official in Prague who was responsible for the reprisal attack on Lidice



Although Hitler seemingly celebrated Heydrich's contribution to the party in his eulogy, the chancellor secretly felt Heydrich was responsible for his own death

of alcohol, and tortured. When the Germans presented the severed head of his mother floating in a fish tank, the teenager finally broke, identifying the church as a possible hiding place for the assassins.

Gabcik and Kubiš had remained at large for three weeks after their attack on Heydrich, but at 4am on the morning of 18 June 1942, the SS and Gestapo thoroughly searched the church. Although they found nothing initially, when they approached the choir loft, a hand grenade exploded nearby and rifle fire erupted. The 750 SS troops ringing the church opened a fusillade of fire. A two-hour battle followed, and several of the agents, including Kubiš and Opalka, were killed or wounded. The Germans shouted to the cornered men to give up. "We are Czechs; we shall never surrender!" came the reply. Several German soldiers had already been killed, and storming the crypt would be costly.

The impasse was finally broken when the Germans ordered the Prague Fire Brigade to run hoses through holes and vents to flood the crypt. Although the hoses were cut, a ladder used to reach them was pulled out and the influx of water resumed. Hours passed. Finally, as SS troops prepared for an overwhelming assault four gunshots rang out. With their ammunition exhausted, the trapped Czechs had tried to dig their way out of the chamber as water continued to rise.

When they had lost all hope, they committed suicide. The bodies from the crypt were all pulled out onto the sidewalk and Curda was there in order to identify the corpses of Valcik and Gabcik.

The bloodletting, though, was far from over. For weeks the Germans continued to exact revenge upon the Czech people, slaughtering at least 5,000 civilians and condemning others to the horror of Mauthausen Concentration Camp. When the orgy of retribution finally subsided, the villages of Lidice and Lezaky had been wiped from the map. The dead included 13 members of Saint Cyril and Methodius Church and more than 250 relatives and supposed friends of the Czech agents. Whether the completion of Operation Anthropoid was worth the terrible price remains a topic of debate among historians.

Heydrich's coffin was draped with the Nazi flag and returned to Berlin five days after his death. A pompous state funeral was held in the Mosaic Hall of the New Reich Chancellery, and both Hitler and Himmler eulogised the Butcher of Prague. The Führer said that Heydrich possessed an "iron heart" and had fallen, "...as a martyr for the preservation and safeguarding of the Reich." Heydrich's body was buried in the Invalidenfriedhof Cemetery in Berlin; however, his legacy of evil has lived on, never to be forgotten.

FURTHER READING

- ★ HEYDRICH HENCHMAN OF DEATH BY CHARLES WHITING
- ★ SEVEN MEN AT DAYBREAK: THE TRUE STORY OF THE ASSASSINATION OF HEYDRICH BY ALAN BURGESS
- ★ THE LIFE AND TIMES OF REINHARD HEYDRICH BY GS GRABER
- ★ THE HISTORY OF THE SS BY GS GRABER

FUNERAL FOR A FIEND

AFTER HIS ASSASSINATION, HEYDRICH WAS GIVEN A SEND OFF THAT WAS FIT FOR ROYALTY

When Reinhard Heydrich, the dreaded Reichsprotektor of Bohemia-Moravia, breathed his last in a bed in Prague's Bulovka Hospital, police officer Bernhard Wehner observed a serene countenance, which belied the legacy of torture and murder the top Nazi left behind.

Wehner noted an, "...uncanny spirituality and entirely perverted beauty, like a renaissance cardinal." It was a moment of supreme irony, and only the beginning, as the Nazi hierarchy and its puppets within the administration of Czech President Emil Hácha, heaped their lavish tributes on Heydrich.

An extended period of ritual mourning followed the Reichsprotektor's death. A six-man SS honour guard stood vigil around the flag covered coffin, topped with a grandiose wreath, as the body lay in state in Prague's Hradcany Castle. Behind the bier hung the sinister black banner of the SS, emblazoned with the familiar lightning runes.

On 7 June 1942, three days after Heydrich's death, the coffin was placed on a gun carriage and paraded in eerie grandeur through the Old Town section of Prague. For the hours-long journey to Berlin, the body was then put aboard a funeral train festooned in black crepe. Hácha and other Czech officials chose to make the journey in the vain hope that such a gesture might assuage Hitler's anger and his desire for German soldiers to "wade in blood" to find Heydrich's assassins.

Upon arrival in Berlin, Heydrich's body was transferred to the New Reich Chancellery. His decorations, including the German Order, Gold Wound Badge, Blood Order Medal and War Merit Cross 1st Class with Swords, were displayed on a pillow. Wreathes, swastikas and pylons topped with flaming torches surrounded the gabled coffin.

The state funeral was a spectacle of Nazi propaganda. Hitler greeted Heydrich's children as the strains of *Siegfried's Funeral March* from composer Richard Wagner's *Götterdämmerung*

provided sullen background music. Himmler was visibly moved. The Führer expressed his fondness for Heydrich by using the familiar "dir" rather than the formal "ihnen" and called the departed: "One of the finest National Socialists, one of the strongest defenders of German Reich thought, and one of the greatest opponents of all enemies of the Reich."

Following a lengthy procession through the streets of the Nazi capital, Heydrich's grave in the Invalidenfriedhof Cemetery was topped with a temporary wooden marker. An impressive monument, designed by sculptor Arno Breker and architect Wilhelm Kreis, was planned; however, the exigencies of war intervened. It was never built. Today, much for the better, the exact location of Heydrich's grave within the cemetery's confines remains unknown.



Above: A postage stamp issued by the Third Reich in honour of the slain Heydrich features his death mask



Heydrich's state funeral was a lavish affair, and was attended by all the top Nazi party officials

EDWARD I



THE HAMMER^{OF} BRITAIN

WORDS TOM GARNER

England's notorious king was a fearsome soldier whose prolific career included conquering Wales, sparring with France and subjugating Scotland

At a field near Evesham in Worcestershire, an English rebel army finds itself trapped and outnumbered by a force twice its size. Its leader, Simon de Montfort, loses his horse and is killed in the fighting; his vengeful enemies savagely mutilate his body. The mastermind behind de Montfort's gruesome death was his nephew by marriage, Lord Edward, the eldest son and heir of King Henry III. The Battle of Evesham was Edward's first major victory in the field and its ruthless execution would characterise his later campaigns as King Edward I of England.

Edward is popularly known today as the 'Hammer of the Scots' for his famous wars in Scotland, but his military career was not defined by, or confined to, northern Britain. In fact, his remarkably varied feats as a soldier dominated the latter half of the 13th century and included not just campaigns in Scotland but Wales, England, France and even the Holy Land. He proved himself adept, not just in battle but also in logistics, sieges and military architecture. However, this proficiency came at a heavy cost, and this most powerful of English kings would leave a conflicted legacy of martial prowess and coldly calculated brutality.

The Second Barons' War

Born in 1239, Edward was the first heir to the throne of England to be given an Anglo-Saxon Christian name since the Norman Conquest of 1066. Although Norman-French in outlook,

Edward would nonetheless grow up to fight his campaigns with an obsessive zeal to exclusively demonstrate the might of the English crown. However, his military apprenticeship was forged in the fires of a significant civil war, where his right to the throne was almost lost.

The Second Barons' War of 1264-67 was an attempt by some of Henry III's nobles, led by Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester, to reassert the terms of Magna Carta on a reluctant king and to persuade him to surrender more powers to a baronial council. When both sides assembled armies, civil war was inevitable and Lord Edward (as he was then known) vigorously fought for his father, despite having once been heavily influenced by de Montfort himself.

Though he claimed to be a follower of the knightly chivalric ideal, Edward began his first war by breaking his word and acting ruthlessly – traits that would turn out to be lifelong. He first forced his way into Gloucester, but when a relieving force under the Earl of Derby appeared, he agreed to a truce. Once that was concluded and Derby departed, Edward ignored the agreement and pillaged Gloucester, assaulting Northampton. He then launched a counterattack against Derby's lands by capturing Tutbury Castle and ravaging the earl's lands.

Meanwhile, rebel forces had gathered strength in the south east and they met the royalists on 14 May 1264 at Lewes, which would be Edward's first pitched battle. The prince was in command of the right wing of the cavalry and led a successful charge against

the Londoners in the rebel army. Although his part of the battle led to a rebel rout, Edward could not control his troops effectively and by the time he managed to regroup them, the main battle had been lost. After negotiations, Edward gave himself up as a hostage, with the stipulation that he was not to be released until the rebels had reached a final settlement with Henry III. Edward became a prisoner for a year while de Montfort established an unintentionally radical movement that invited the representatives of the commons to parliament for the first time, to bolster support for the rebel cause.

Despite this significant development in representative government, de Montfort could not contain his royal prisoner, and Edward successfully escaped in May 1265 and gathered troops to his standard. Gloucester and Worcester were taken, and when de Montfort tried to make a hasty alliance with the Welsh, the royalists broke the bridges across the River Severn to prevent any potential support.

The end came when de Montfort marched north to support his son at Kenilworth Castle, but was caught by the royalist army at Evesham on 4 August 1265. Here, Henry III was present but Edward commanded the army. To trap the rebels, Lord Edward advanced under banners that had been captured from de Montfort's son, and the Earl of Leicester found himself completely surrounded. De Montfort's defensive formation quickly crumbled and he was viciously killed along with his eldest son Henry. Such was the savagery of the battle that a chronicler referred to the fight as: "The murder of Evesham, for battle it was none." 26-year-old Edward had vanquished his foes and preserved his father's kingdom.

Taking the cross

Edward had conducted his campaign in the Second Barons' War in a distinctly unchivalric manner, but his next military adventure involved

"ALTHOUGH NORMAN-FRENCH IN OUTLOOK, EDWARD WOULD NONETHELESS GROW UP TO FIGHT HIS CAMPAIGNS WITH AN OBSESSIVE ZEAL TO EXCLUSIVELY DEMONSTRATE THE MIGHT OF THE ENGLISH CROWN"

A 13th-century map of Britain. Edward's reign was dominated by his wars to take control of the whole island



Edward I as he might have appeared during the conquest of Wales c.1277-83. The king's face is based on a drawing from 1774 when his well-preserved body was exhumed in Westminster Abbey and sketched. At 1.8 metres tall, Edward was known as 'Longshanks' and would have towered above his contemporaries. Chroniclers described him as being, "...of swarthy complexion, strong of body, but lean." He also had an eye condition called blepharoptosis, which caused a drooping eyelid. It is reckoned that he inherited this condition from his father Henry III. Taken altogether, the king's appearance would have made him an intimidating figure.

taking up the most ideal knightly cause in Christendom: crusading. By the 13th century, crusading did not just involve the fight for Jerusalem against Islam, but also against Christian heretical sects. Nonetheless, Edward 'took the Cross' in 1268 to take part in the more traditional 'Ninth Crusade', to preserve what was left of the Christian kingdom of Jerusalem in Palestine. He would be following in the footsteps of his great uncle, Richard the Lionheart.

After two years of delays, Edward left for the Holy Land in 1270 with a small force composed of men who had fought on the royalist side in the civil war. The plan was to join France's Louis IX in attacking the north African city of Tunis, but Louis died of dysentery outside the city and Edward continued alone, landing at Acre in May 1271. At the time, Acre was under pressure from the Mamluk leader Baibars and Edward was in no position to fully confront him. The English did try to make various sorties from Acre but they achieved little, and often fell prey to the oppressive heat and food poisoning.

Edward's only crusading success was winning a small engagement 65 kilometres from Acre at Qaqun, but that remained the extent of his military activity.

Despite this, the prince's experiences during the Ninth Crusade did yield one incident that demonstrated his own personal fighting ability and strength. In June 1272, a Muslim assassin was despatched to murder him with a poisoned dagger. The assassin managed to access Edward's

Left: A sculpture of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, the last sovereign prince of Wales, in City Hall, Cardiff



Above: The death of Simon de Montfort at the Battle of Evesham. The rebel earl had once been on good terms with Edward

apartments and attacked him. Edward fought back by kicking his assailant and then killed him with his own weapon. However, he was wounded in the arm by the dagger and the wound began to putrefy. One story is that his wife, Eleanor, sucked the poison out of the wound, but it is more likely that an English doctor who cut away the decaying flesh cured Edward. The prince survived at a crucial time because in the same year Henry III died and the tough crusader became King Edward I (despite being named after Edward the Confessor). The new monarch did not return to England until 1274, but once he had did, he made his presence felt.

The conquest of Wales

Ever since the Norman Conquest of England, Anglo-Norman colonists had taken control of much of Wales, and English kings were able to establish a loose authority on the Welsh. By the 13th century, there had been a resurgence of native power. Although the country was split into principalities, the Prince of Gwynedd in north Wales, Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, gained supremacy and ruled as a de facto independent ruler. Such was his success that in 1267 Henry III granted Llywelyn the title 'Prince of Wales' as part of the Treaty of Montgomery. Edward was forced to give up lands to the Welsh prince, but this would dramatically change when he became king.

One of the stipulations of the Treaty of Montgomery was that Llywelyn had to

acknowledge the superior lordship of the English king, but when Edward returned home in 1274, Llywelyn failed to answer the summons to swear fealty. This may have been because the prince feared for his safety, but he did not help matters by pursuing a marriage with de Montfort's daughter and building a threatening castle at Dolforwyn. This was unacceptable to Edward, and in late 1276, war broke out.

After meticulously preparing for the campaign, the king led a great royal army of about 15,000 men from Chester into Wales. The intention was to strike at Llywelyn's heartland in Snowdonia and the army advanced along the north Welsh coast to Deganwy.

The chief characteristic of this campaign was Edward's logistical nous, as the mountainous terrain of Wales did not allow for massed cavalry charges in pitched battles. Naval support was an essential element of the invasion and ships were used to transport English troops to the island of Anglesey. In a clever move, about 300 harvesters were put ashore on the fertile island and gathered in the grain supplies. This tactic severely reduced Llywelyn's capacity to resist and the Welsh now faced starvation. The overwhelming strength of the English forced Llywelyn to the negotiating table and his powers were severely reduced. From now on, the prince of Wales could only receive homage from the

"EDWARD WAS FORCED TO GIVE UP LANDS TO THE WELSH PRINCE, BUT THIS SITUATION WOULD DRAMATICALLY CHANGE WHEN HE BECAME KING"

BEAUMARIS

Begun in 1295, Beaumaris was the last and largest castle built by Edward I in Wales. Although it was never completed, it remains one of the most sophisticated examples of Medieval military architecture in Britain.

**CAERNARFON**

The seat of English power in north Wales, Caernarfon was the most imposing of the 'iron ring' of castles. The polygonal towers were designed to resemble the Byzantine walls of Constantinople: an unsubtle reference to Edward's imperial power.

CRICCIETH

CASTLES OF CONQUEST

The most visible aspect of Edward I's impact on Wales today is the series of imposing fortresses, which he built to subdue the local population. The king employed an architect from Savoy called James of Saint George to construct the castles in an continental style. Built in stages between 1278-95, James used the best masons and carpenters available, and the castles' high levels of preservation owe much to the skill of the workmen involved in their construction. Huge in scale and virtually impregnable, they are an enduring reflection of Edward's pseudo-imperial ambitions towards his new Welsh subjects.

HARLECH

Set in a spectacular location, Harlech was built in 1283 and originally faced out to the sea. It was part of the 'iron ring' of castles surrounding the coastal fringes of Snowdonia.

**CONWY**

Consisting of eight huge towers and a high curtain wall, Conwy is also still served by a largely intact Medieval town wall. Edward I was once briefly besieged in the castle in 1295.

**FLINT**

Although largely ruined today, Flint is significant as the first castle built at Edward I's instruction after his first invasion in 1277.



"HUGE IN SCALE AND VIRTUALLY IMPREGNABLE, THEY ARE AN ENDURING REFLECTION OF EDWARD'S PSEUDO-IMPERIAL AMBITIONS TOWARDS HIS NEW WELSH SUBJECTS"

RHUDDLAN

Although a fortress had existed before the 13th century, Rhuddlan was significantly built upon and added to by James of Saint George in 1277.



lords of Snowdonia, and to ensure Llywelyn's subservience, Edward built new castles at Flint, Rhuddlan, Builth and Aberystwyth.

This enforced settlement did not last. The Welsh grew angry about the behaviour of English officials in different parts of Wales over various legal disputes. Eventually, Llywelyn himself became embroiled in a case that struck at the heart of the legal precedence of English law in Wales and this in turn fuelled a debate about Welsh identity. War broke out again in

April 1282, when the prince's brother, Dafydd ap Gruffudd, attacked Hawarden Castle and other English fortresses came under assault. Edward immediately responded and arranged a second invasion similar to the first, by campaigning in the north and using logistics to his advantage. However, this time the conflict was larger in scale, bitter and more protracted.

The king called on his overseas dominions of Ireland, Gascony and Ponthieu for assistance and made plans to link Anglesey to the Welsh

mainland by an elaborate pontoon bridge. By autumn 1282, Llywelyn's Snowdonia heartland was threatened on all sides, particularly from Edward's army advancing from Chester and a force based in Anglesey. There were also smaller operations in the southern and border regions of Wales. Edward did suffer a setback when the Welsh won victories against his subordinates at the Battles of Moel-y-don and Llandeilo Fawr, but these defeats only hardened the king's resolve to crush the Welsh.

Edward then experienced a great stroke of luck when Llywelyn was killed at the Battle of Irton Bridge on 11 December 1282. The prince had been attempting a daring move into mid-Wales to escape the virtual blockade of Snowdonia, but he was lured into a trap and killed in the battle. His head was impaled on a spike in London. The fight was notable as being an early occasion when English archers had an effective

"EDWARD DID SUFFER A SETBACK WHEN THE WELSH WON VICTORIES AGAINST HIS SUBORDINATES AT THE BATTLES OF MOEL-Y-DON AND LLANDEILO FAWR, BUT THESE DEFEATS ONLY HARDENED THE KING'S RESOLVE TO CRUSH THE WELSH"

Although it was hard-fought, the Battle of Falkirk was a crushing victory for Edward, but it did not break the back of Scottish resistance



role in weakening Welsh formations of defensive spearmen known as 'schiltrons'. Edward would use the example of Irfon Bridge years later at a more dramatic clash at Falkirk in Scotland. In the meantime, Llywelyn's death took the heart out of the rebellion and although his brother Dafydd carried on the fight, it was to little effect. The last Welsh fortress at Castell y Bere was captured in April 1283 and Dafydd was betrayed. He was hanged, drawn and quartered by the English as a traitor at Shrewsbury.

Edward was victorious and followed his success with a full-scale English settlement of Wales, made official in the 'Statute of Wales'. Under its terms, new counties were created, the English administration was extended, Welsh nobles were disinherited and Llywelyn's Gwynedd dynasty was destroyed. As the Statute triumphantly announced, Edward had ensured that Wales was, "Wholly and entirely transferred under our proper dominion." To seal his conquest, Edward famously constructed more complex castles at Harlech, Conwy and Caernarfon in a strategic ring to literally hem in his new subjects.

Nevertheless, the Welsh did not submit willingly, and the 1282 conquest came under serious threat with two subsequent rebellions in 1287 and 1294. The first, in 1287, was put down relatively quickly, but the rebellion of 1294 was more serious. A distant relative of the Gwynedd dynasty, Madog ap Llywelyn, led a widespread and popular uprising against the oppressive administration and the English were taken by surprise. Most of Edward's new castles, except Caernarfon, held out, but many baronial fortresses fell to the rebels.

Edward once again assembled an army at Chester while his barons regrouped and operated in southern and mid-Wales. Overall, the English used 30,000 men to quash the rebellion, even though Edward himself was besieged at Conwy during the winter of 1294-95. Eventually, the Earl of Warwick defeated Madog at Maes Moydog and the revolt collapsed. Despite being victorious, Edward had been greatly embarrassed by the insurgency, and repressing it had cost £55,000, the equivalent of about £30 million today. In a further measure to assert his authority, the king built another new castle at Beaumaris on Anglesey, and this time Wales was finally subdued. The great conquest of his reign was complete but Edward's wars were far from over.

Fighting the French

Remarkably, the Welsh invasions took second place in Edward's mind to his quarrels with King Philippe IV of France. As a Plantagenet, Edward's lineage was largely French and he

"EDWARD HAD BEEN GREATLY EMBARRASSED BY THE INSURGENCY, AND REPRESSING IT HAD COST £55,000, THE EQUIVALENT OF ABOUT £30 MILLION TODAY"

THE INNOVATIONS OF FALKIRK

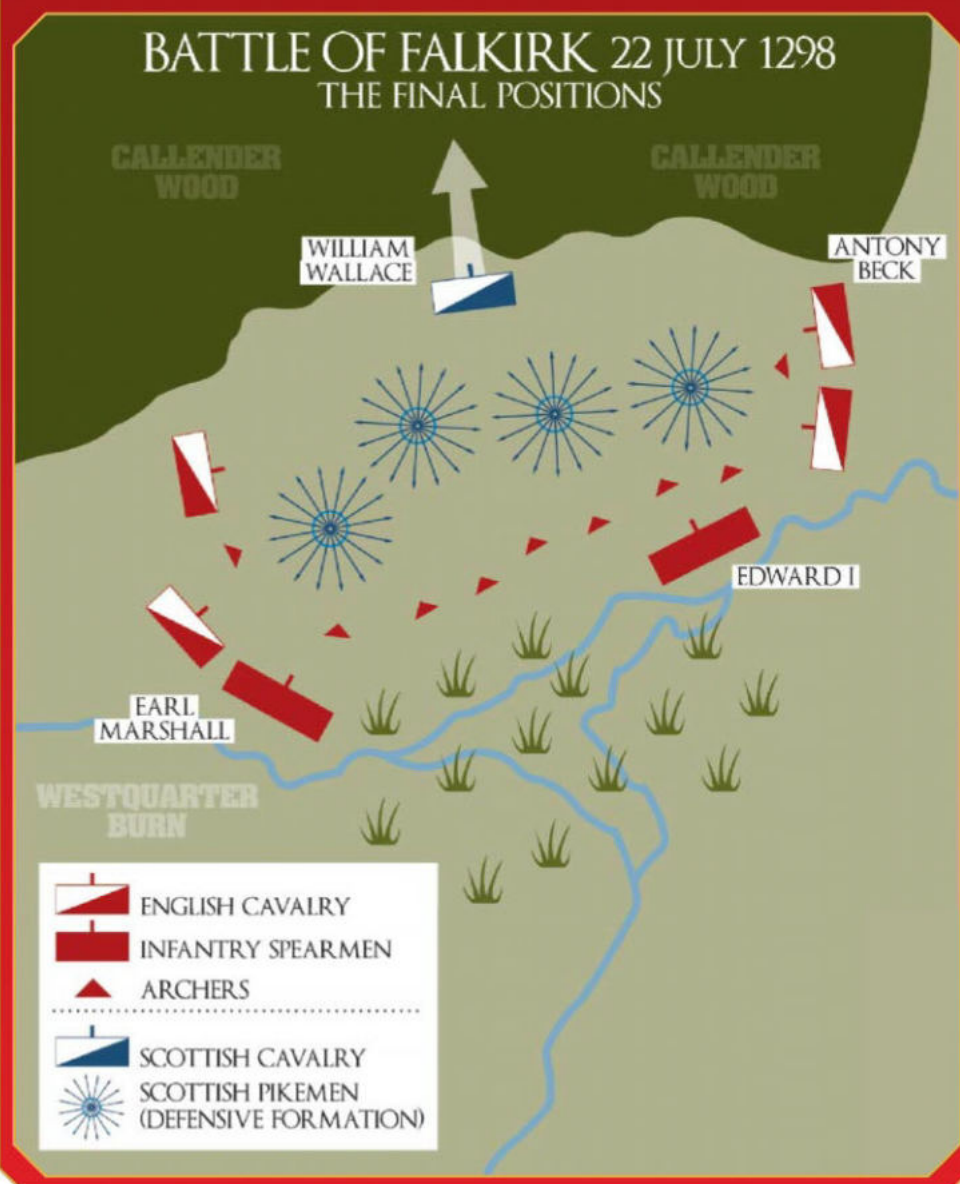
BOTH EDWARD I AND SIR WILLIAM WALLACE USED NOVEL TACTICS IN THEIR FAMOUS CLASH, WHICH WOULD LATER INFLUENCE FUTURE ARMIES

Both the English and Scottish armies at Falkirk used tactics that were quite original for the time, and in both cases the lessons learned from the battle would inadvertently influence the way wars were fought in the future. Edward's army consisted of English, Irish and Welsh infantry along with a powerful body of cavalry. At the time, the cavalry was the dominant unit in Medieval armies and massed charges were seen as the most effective way to defeat infantry. Nevertheless, archery was becoming increasingly important in England, so much so that royal statutes demanded that every man owned and practised with longbows and officials regularly checked them.

At Falkirk, the English cavalry noticeably failed against the Scottish spearmen, causing Edward to issue a ruthless order to his archers to concentrate shots on particularly stubborn points of resistance. This worked exceptionally well as most of the Scots were unarmoured and their ranks began to quickly fall. Once the Scottish lines were thin enough, the cavalry were then able to mow them down and win the day.

Falkirk was the first sizeable European battle where archers played a leading part in the victory and from that point on they became integral to English armies, particularly during the Hundred Years' War against the French.

Conversely, William Wallace used a tactic at Falkirk that would also change the rules of war. His infantry were armed with three-metre long pikes and he organised them into four large defensive circles called 'schiltrons'. The men would stand shoulder to shoulder in deep ranks and point their pikes at an oblique angle. Each schiltrons would resemble a large deadly hedgehog and they were initially effective against Edward's cavalry who could not break them. Although the Welsh had used schiltrons unsuccessfully, if Edward had not deployed his archers, it is quite possible that Wallace could have won. The stubbornness of the schiltrons proved an inspiration to later defensive blocks such as the Swiss pikemen, Spanish tercios and even the famous British squares of the Napoleonic Wars.



himself was duke of Aquitaine and technically a vassal of the French king. Nonetheless, Philippe felt threatened by Edward and ordered him to personally perform homage for his lands.

War broke out in 1294 after Edward, who was occupied with the Welsh rebellion, failed to appear and Philippe forfeited the English region of Gascony. Edward arranged alliances with princes in the Low Countries, Germany and Burgundy to attack Philippe on different sides, but on this occasion, Edward's attack did not go to plan. Philippe mollified the princes and English expeditions to Gascony met with minor defeats and frustrations. Indeed the most serious fighting that Edward encountered was between his own sailors of the Cinque Ports and Yarmouth during disembarkation in the Low Countries.

Peace was all but concluded in 1298 but it had been an ignominious war for Edward, with the cost adding up to a shocking £575,000 (nearly £309 million today). Edward's failure in France was not through lack of military skill but because he was distracted by a much more intense war in a land that became his defining legacy: Scotland.

Hammer of the Scots

The northern part of Britain was a well-established independent kingdom, but the English crown had always viewed its Scottish neighbour as an inferior power. When King Alexander III died in 1286 without an obvious heir, Edward spent the next decade biding his time and arbitrating between feuding Scottish nobles for the crown, while he slowly asserted his own power over the country. After deliberately picking a puppet king called John Balliol to rule Scotland, Edward eventually declared war after Balliol tried to assert himself and made an alliance with France. In March 1296, he assembled an invasion of at least 20,000 men, supported by a fleet in

Newcastle-upon-Tyne and marched to the then Scottish border settlement of Berwick-upon-Tweed. It was then the richest town in Scotland, and when Edward compelled the garrison to surrender, the defenders bared their buttocks at him in defiance. This was an unwise gesture.

The king's soldiers poured over the inadequate ditches and palisades and torched the town. According to one chronicler, Edward was, "...angry like a boar pursued by wolves" and reputedly urged his men to slaughter the town's inhabitants. Thousands were killed with, "...the bodies falling like autumn leaves." When the English army left the destruction, Edward is reported to have cruelly said, "A man does good business when he rids himself of a turd." Such was the reality of Medieval 'chivalric' warfare.

The army continued with success and the Earl of Surrey won a victory at Dunbar, which reduced the Scots' morale. When Edward arrived to accept the surrender of Dunbar Castle, he sent the prisoners to England in humiliating conditions, reportedly conveying them, "...two and two together, mounted on a hackney, some in carts with fetters on their feet." By now, Edward was marching virtually unopposed through Scotland and most of the nobility swore allegiance to him, with John Balliol being ritually deposed and exiled. To seal his new triumph, Edward removed the symbolic 'Stone of Destiny' from the royal coronation church at Scone and installed it in his own throne at Westminster Abbey. The stone would not be returned to Scotland until 1996. To Edward, his swift victory seemed like a repeat of Wales and he returned home to focus on his French operations. However, he had not reckoned for the armed resistance that would force his return to Scotland.

Edward left an English administration that had not learned its lessons in Wales and enforced an oppressive regime. A resistance



Saint Edward's Chair was commissioned by Edward I in 1296 to contain the Stone of Destiny, Scotland's coronation stone. It was a flagrant symbol of England's dominance within Britain

"WHEN THE ENGLISH ARMY LEFT THE DESTRUCTION, EDWARD IS REPORTED TO HAVE CRUELLY SAID, "A MAN DOES GOOD BUSINESS WHEN HE RIDS HIMSELF OF A TURD." SUCH WAS THE REALITY OF MEDIEVAL 'CHIVALRIC' WARFARE"

soon emerged in different parts of the country with the main elements led by minor members of the gentry, Andrew Moray and William Wallace. Both men conducted raids against English centres of occupation and they eventually joined forces, creating an army of about 5,000-6,000 men. Edward was preoccupied, but the English gathered an army of about 10,000 men and marched to confront the rebels. On 11 September 1297, Moray and Wallace inflicted an embarrassing defeat on the English at the Battle of Stirling Bridge. The two men were soon declared 'guardians of Scotland', but Moray was mortally wounded

SLEDGEHAMMER DIPLOMACY

EDWARD'S FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS HIS NEIGHBOURS WAS FAR FROM CORDIAL & NOWHERE WAS SAFE FROM THE KING'S IRON WILL



WALES

When Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, prince of Wales, failed to pay homage to Edward for his lands, Edward launched an invasion. In the subsequent fallout, Llywelyn's political authority and his lands were reduced to the mountains of Snowdonia. The Welsh were also fined a war indemnity of £50,000 (£25 million today). When Llywelyn was later killed in a second invasion, Edward disinherited the Welsh nobility and imposed an oppressive English administration.



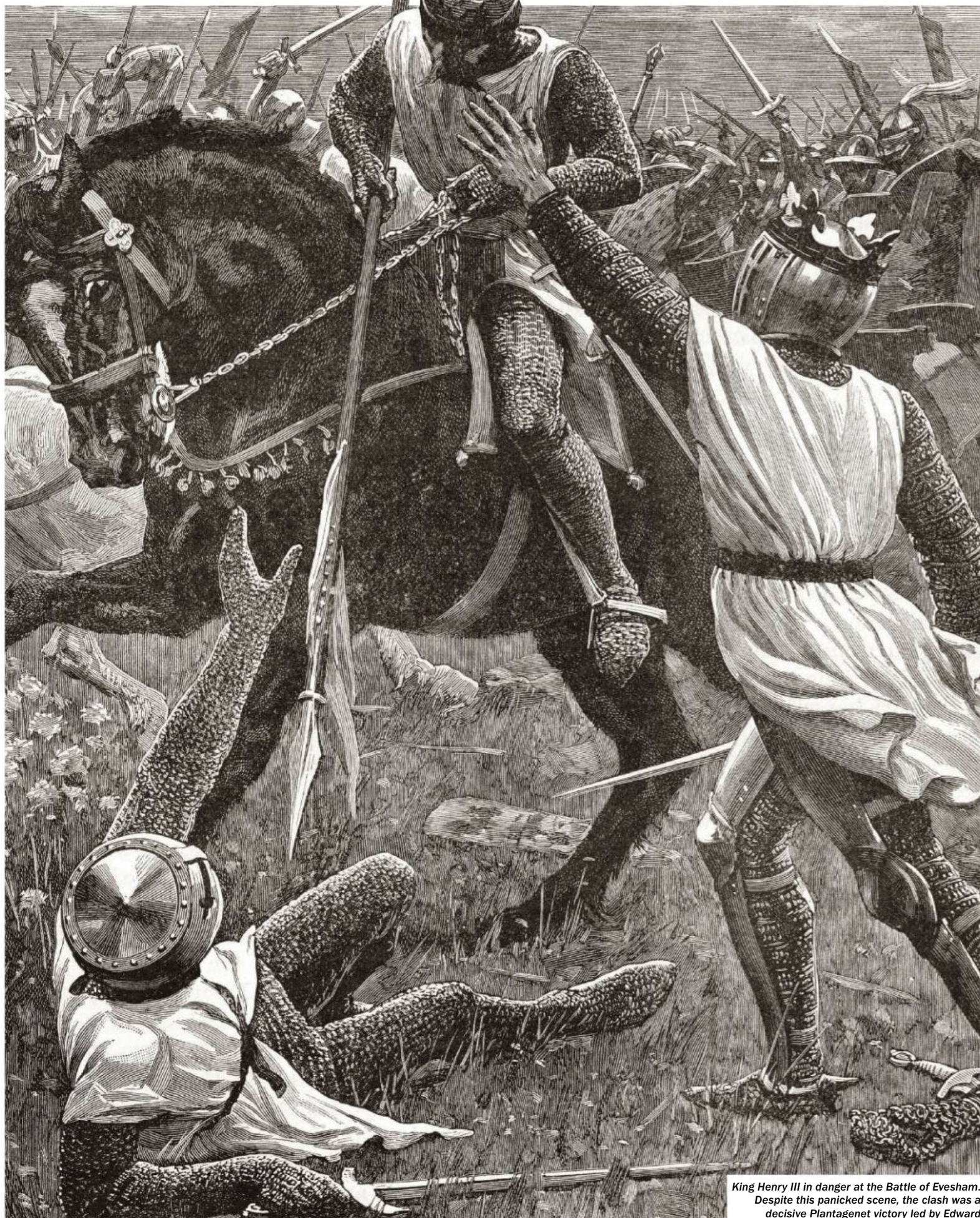
FRANCE

In the 13th century, England had a close and complex relationship with France. The English elite was French-speaking and Edward's grandfather, John, had lost many ancestral lands in France, including Normandy. Edward had to pay homage for his remaining French lands to Philippe IV. However, war broke out when Philippe tried to forfeit Gascony. The king responded by scheming with other neighbouring princes to attack France. Although the war was inconclusive, it dragged on for ten years and cost vast amounts of money.



SCOTLAND

Edward's dealings with Scotland were duplicitous and self-serving. When the Scottish throne became vacant, the nobility asked Edward to choose the next king. Edward agreed but made unacceptable demands on the selected king John Balliol, that made him fully subservient to the English crown. When John eventually refused to comply, Edward forced him to abdicate and annexed Scotland while imposing a harsh occupation. By 1305, the kingdom was reduced to the status of 'land' and was ruled in Edward's name.



King Henry III in danger at the Battle of Evesham. Despite this panicked scene, the clash was a decisive Plantagenet victory led by Edward

and died shortly afterwards. It was a great blow for Edward that relatively lowborn Scots could defeat his armies.

Wallace was now the foremost military leader in Scotland, and after Stirling Bridge, he launched a raid into northern England and was knighted on his return. This incensed the English chroniclers of the time, who were heavily biased against Wallace, describing him as, "...a shunned, deceitful criminal, a hater of piety, a sacrilegious plunderer, an arsonist, and a murderer crueller than Herod and madder than Nero."

Although these sentiments were extreme, Edward could not countenance such a perceived affront to his royal authority and in 1298, he led a large army of 15,000 men into Scotland, which included Irish and even Welsh troops, and lured the elusive Wallace into battle at Falkirk. Wallace was outnumbered but chose a defensive position in marshland and waited for Edward to arrive on 22 July. Remarkably, despite his many years of campaigning, this was only the third set-piece battle of his career and the second one he had commanded – the previous being Evesham more than 30 years previously. Surprisingly, both commanders had everything to prove in the upcoming battle. Wallace seemed to have had a sense that the odds were unfavourable, as he is recorded as saying to his troops: "I have brought you to the ring: now dance if you can."



Above: William Wallace rejects English proposals to lay down his arms. He was one of the few Scottish leaders who consistently fought against Edward's invasions

Edward himself was in a bad way. On the night before the battle his horse had trodden on him while he slept and three of his ribs were broken. After medical attention, he somehow mounted the same horse and showed himself to his troops. An advance was ordered and the army marched towards Wallace's defensive formations of spearmen. English cavalry failed to make an impact against the spiky wall of infantry but Edward was inadvertently assisted by the sudden departure of the Scottish cavalry. Using longbowmen for the first significant time in English military history, the archers were commanded to shoot into the dense masses of spearmen and the Scots now began to disintegrate under the intense volleys. At the opportune moment, Edward sent the cavalry into the thinning ranks and the Scots were destroyed. Wallace managed to escape but thousands of his men were dead and Edward had decisively avenged Stirling Bridge.

Unlike Wales, Edward could not entirely bend Scotland to his will. In the subsequent years, he led relentless campaigns to subdue the Scots and received the submission of most of its nobles. However, he could not conquer the country, even though Wallace was eventually captured and brutally executed in 1305. By now, Edward was old and Robert the Bruce, who was crowned as king of Scots in 1306, replaced Wallace as leader of the resistance.

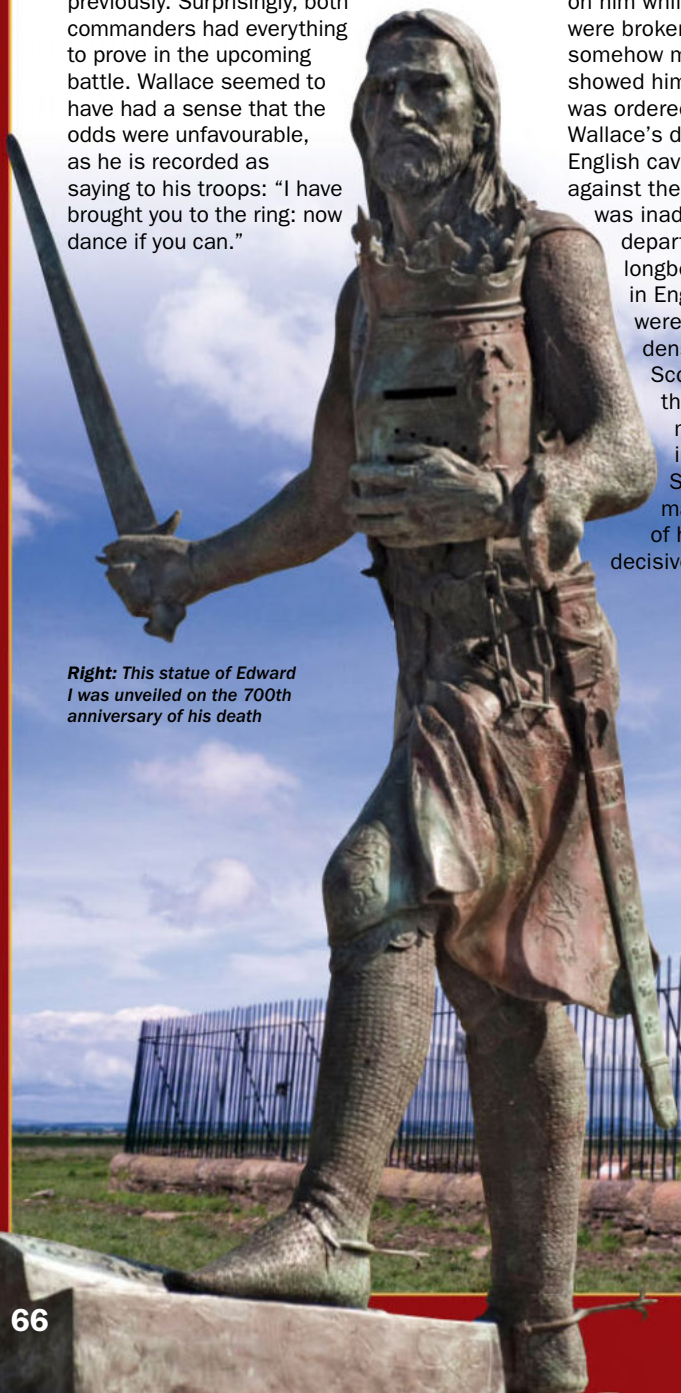
After a Scottish victory at Loudoun Hill, Edward once again marched north but died near the border on 7 July 1307, aged 68. The 'Hammer of the Scots' may not have completed his conquests, but his endless wars permanently scarred relations between England, Scotland and Wales. It is arguable that the Scottish and Welsh independence movements of today have their roots in the far past, when one mighty king of England sought to bring all of Britain under his rule and didn't care for the consequences.

FURTHER READING

- ★ **THE BOWMEN OF ENGLAND** BY DONALD FEATHERSTONE (PEN AND SWORD MILITARY CLASSICS, 2003)
- ★ **THE HAMMER OF SCOTS. EDWARD I AND THE SCOTTISH WARS OF INDEPENDENCE** BY DAVID SANTIUSTE (PEN AND SWORD MILITARY, 2015)

This 19th-century memorial in Cumbria, commemorates the spot where Edward I died in 1307. He was intending to put down a Scottish rebellion

Right: This statue of Edward I was unveiled on the 700th anniversary of his death



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MESSERSCHMITT ME

262

WORDS MICHAEL HASKEW

The first operational jet fighter heralded a new era of aviation, but failed to make a significant impact on the war

In the summer of 1944, Allied bombers found themselves facing a new, terrifying threat to their raids over Nazi Germany. This sleek, streamlined aircraft was capable of speeds unseen before in aerial combat, making propeller-powered craft appear sluggish by comparison. Few of the bewildered Allied aircrew could have guessed it at the time, but what they were encountering, and fighting off as best they could, was the harbinger of jet-powered warfare: the Me 262.

Although jet technology made its debut on the battlefield relatively late in the war, engineers in Britain, America and Germany had been frantically developing and refining these next-generation engines since at least the late 1920s. While Britain's Frank Whittle formed the earliest turbojet engine designs, it was Germany's

Hans von Ohain who completed the first practical jet aircraft, the He 178, in 1939. Coincidentally, the He 178 saw its first test flight just days before the invasion of Poland.

For much of the war, lack of proper materials, as well as politics, hampered the development of Germany's first functional jet fighter. Although test flights of the Me 262 began around 1942, with mixed success, the first aircraft would not enter combat for another two years.

In the air, pilots encountered trouble with the engine turbines, which struggled to remain intact under the sheer power of the jet propulsion. Additionally, after the invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, there was little patience among the Nazi hierarchy for a costly, experimental aircraft.

MESSERSCHMITT ME 262

MANUFACTURER: MESSERSCHMITT

ROLE: FIGHTER

MAXIMUM SPEED: 870 KP/H (541 MPH)

MAXIMUM RANGE: 1,049 KILOMETRES (652 MILES)

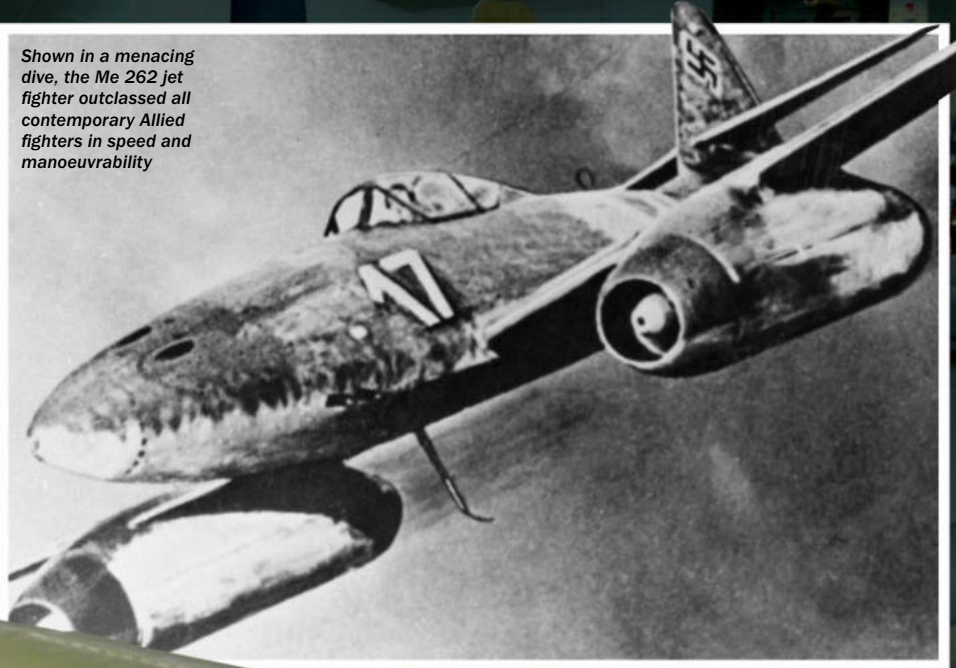
POWER: TWIN JUNKER JUMO 004B

ARMAMENT: 4 X 30MM MK 108 CANNONS

CREW: 1

“PILOTS ENCOUNTERED TROUBLE WITH THE ENGINE TURBINES, WHICH STRUGGLED TO REMAIN INTACT UNDER THE SHEER POWER OF THE JET PROPULSION”

Shown in a menacing dive, the Me 262 jet fighter outclassed all contemporary Allied fighters in speed and manoeuvrability



The Me 262 incorporated a tricycle landing gear, which was common to other experimental jets of the Third Reich



Although the Me 262 was nicknamed the Schwalbe, or Swallow, the sharp nose also gave it a shark-like appearance

ENGINES

The Junkers Jumo 004B was the world's first production turbojet engine, and Junkers Motoren (Jumo) manufactured approximately 8,000 of them in Germany during World War II. A pair of these powerful engines delivered a combined 1.34 tons (2,968 pounds) of thrust, providing the Me 262 with a significant advantage in speed over Allied fighters. Three types of fuel were utilised, including diesel, high-octane aviation gasoline and coal-based J-2 synthetic. Development of the Jumo 004B began in the mid-1930s, however, turbine blade failures and other issues delayed full production until 1944. After the war, the Soviet Union continued to produce operational Jumo 004 engines.

Right: Its covering stripped away, the inner workings of the Junkers Jumo 004B are revealed



The massive air intake at the forward section of the burly Junkers Jumo 004B engine nacelle directed current through the structure

"A PAIR OF THESE POWERFUL ENGINES DELIVERED A COMBINED 1.34 TONS (2,968 POUNDS) OF THRUST, PROVIDING THE ME 262 WITH A SIGNIFICANT ADVANTAGE IN SPEED OVER ALLIED FIGHTERS"

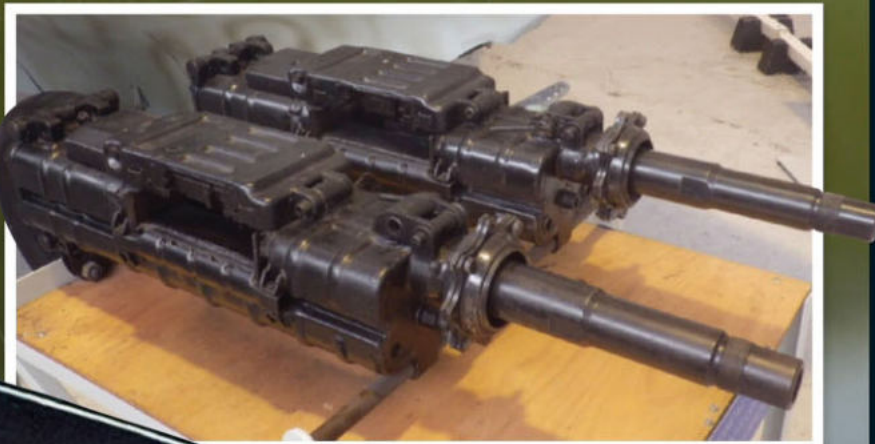


Left: This cutaway photograph reveals the troublesome turbine fan blades that delayed development of the Junkers Jumo 004B jet engine

The nose of the Me 262 jet fighter housed lethal Rheinmetall-Borsig Mk 108 30mm autocannon that fired through the cowling

Below: Although it possessed relatively low muzzle velocity and rate of fire, the Mk 108 30mm autocannon was devastating against enemy aircraft

Below, left: Stacked inside the nose cowling of the Me 262, four Mk 106 30mm autocannons were serviced from each flank



ARMAMENT

Without a government contract, arms manufacturer Rheinmetall-Borsig began developing the potent Mk 108 30mm autocannon for combat aircraft in 1940. Soon, the German Air Ministry observed its robust firepower, and production began in 1943. Although low muzzle velocity limited its range, the weapon was effective, particularly in combination with the speedy Me 262 jet fighter, which mounted up to four cannon in its nose cowling. However, the pilot was required to demonstrate superior flying skill to avoid a collision while closing with his target. The Mk 108 required an average of only four hits to destroy Allied heavy bombers.

“THE PILOT WAS REQUIRED TO DEMONSTRATE SUPERIOR FLYING SKILL TO AVOID A COLLISION WHILE CLOSING WITH HIS TARGET”



An armorer services one of the Mk 108 30mm autocannons aboard a night fighter variant of the Me 262

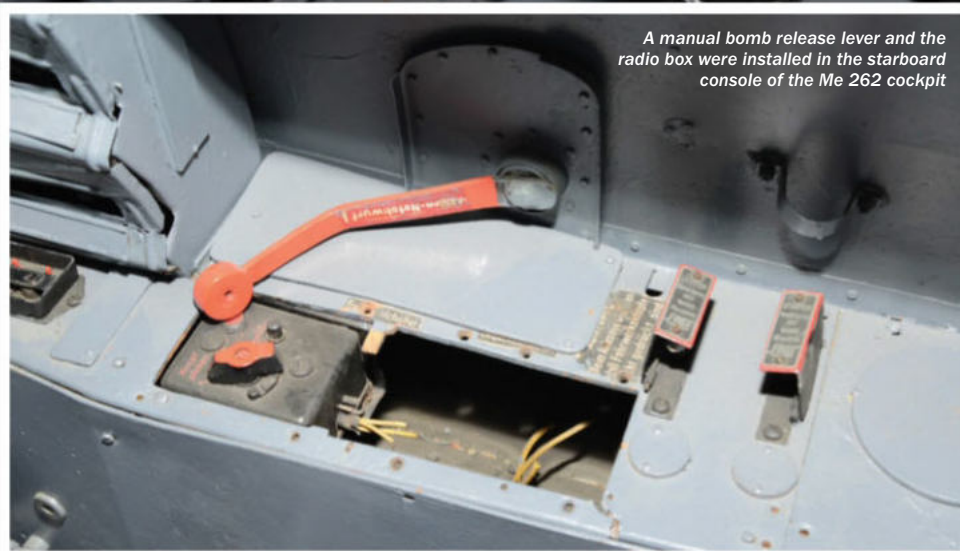
"THE 90MM-THICK ARMoured GLASS WINDSCREEN WAS COMPLETE WITH ELECTRIC HEAT FOR DE-ICING"



The main instrument panel of the Me 262 cockpit allowed the pilot to view flight characteristics, gauges and armament controls

COCKPIT

The cockpit of the Me 262 was similar to other Messerschmitt aircraft of World War II. The pilot's seat and rudder pedals were adjustable; the 90mm-thick armoured glass windscreen was complete with electric heat for de-icing; the Revi 16B gunsight, stowed for takeoff and landing, was mounted inside the windscreen; the control column carried a spring-loaded safety device covering firing buttons that operated the 30mm cannon, along with buttons for bomb release, breechblock clearing and radio transmission; and the main instrument panel included the flight panel on the upper left, the armament control panel directly below and the engine performance indicators and gauges on the right.



A manual bomb release lever and the radio box were installed in the starboard console of the Me 262 cockpit

DESIGN

The sleek, aerodynamic silhouette of the Me 262 foreshadowed the designs of future jet fighters, including a low-profile canopy to reduce drag and slightly swept wing construction implemented to balance the centre of gravity when the twin Junkers Jumo 004 jet engines, originally wing-root

mounted, were later moved to wing pods. The fuselage was composed of several sections bolted together and the tricycle landing gear configuration was common to other early Luftwaffe jets. The design also contributed to overall performance, allowing the Me 262 to hold its airspeed longer in tight turns than conventional prop-driven planes, a distinct advantage in combat.



The development of the sleek Me 262 twin-engine jet fighter was delayed due to Hitler's constant meddling

SERVICE HISTORY

THE MOST ADVANCED AIRCRAFT OF WORLD WAR II, THE ME 262 ENTERED SERVICE TOO LATE TO INFLUENCE THE OUTCOME OF THE CONFLICT

When the Luftwaffe General of Fighters, Adolf Galland, flew the new Me 262 jet fighter, he was exhilarated, reporting, "It felt as if angels were pushing."

Indeed, the Me 262 was revolutionary, capable of outperforming Allied propeller-driven fighters and potentially devastating the formations of heavy bombers raining destruction on German cities and industrial centres as World War II progressed.

However, due largely to Hitler's meddling and the lack of firm commitment from the German Air Ministry to its development, the Me 262 did not enter frontline service until the spring of 1944.

Although more than 1,400 were built, fewer than 300 Me 262 aircraft were believed to be operational with the Luftwaffe at any given time. The versatile jet, nicknamed Schwalbe, or Swallow, was employed as a light bomber, actually attacking the American bridgehead across the Rhine River in March 1944, and as

a legendary fighter, outclassing contemporary Allied planes in speed and manoeuvrability.

During World War II, a total of seven Luftwaffe units – most notably Kommando Nowotny, also known as Jagdgeschwader 7 (JG 7) – flew the Me 262 in combat.

Named for its commander, Major Walter Nowotny, JG 7 developed the tactics to be employed with the new jet fighter. Nowotny was credited with 258 aerial victories during the war, three of them while piloting the Me 262. He died when he crashed his jet after an air battle with American fighters on 8 November 1944.

By the end of World War II, 28 Luftwaffe pilots had achieved 'ace' status, with five or more kills while flying the innovative aircraft, and Me 262 pilots were believed to have destroyed approximately 200 Allied planes. During the late 1940s, American and Soviet engineers put captured German jets through their paces, and the Me 262 design influenced succeeding generations of military aircraft.

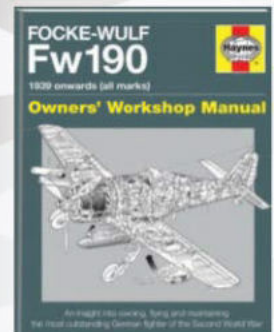
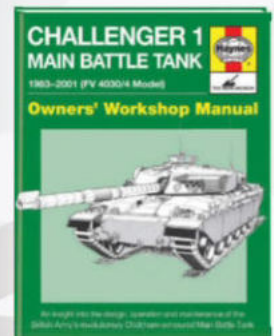
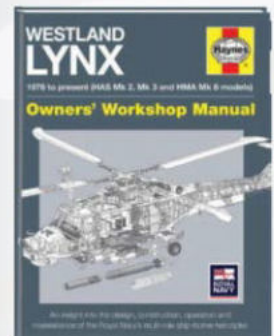
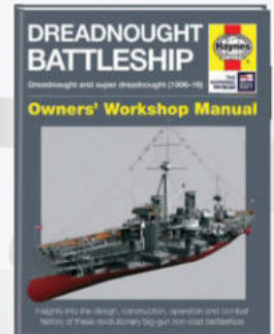


The Me 262 jet fighter's narrow cockpit was ergonomically functional in the arrangement of the control stick, instrument panel, and canopy

ROYAL AIR FORCE museum
The Me 262 pictured is exhibited in the RAF Museum, London. For more, visit www.rafmuseum.org.uk



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BRIEFING

The Polisario

Occupied and exploited by an unrepentant aggressor, the Sahrawi nation is tired of waiting. Will Africa's bravest army go to war again?

WORDS MIGUEL MIRANDA

The Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) is perhaps the strangest country on Earth. Locked away in a forgotten corner of the Sahara desert, its citizens are forced to eke subsistence from tending goats and myriad handicrafts. There's little else to do, out in the endless rocks and sand stretching beneath the grey heavens. Even more distressing, the few Sahrawis within the SADR – or what's left of it – have to contend with the terrible possibility that their state is fiction.

Morocco's control of Western Sahara, a region squeezed between Mauritania and the Atlantic Ocean, is a painful burden for the Sahrawis, who live with discrimination and a lack of civil liberties. The problem with joining the outlaw Sahrawis outside Morocco is there's no going back by then.

Starting from the Atlantic coast – where some of the finest surfing spots in the world can be found – extending right across the unforgiving desert, is the berm. The way it's described in most accounts inflates this engineering marvel to a proper noun: the Berm. It is reportedly the single greatest man-made fortification in modern times, a 2,700-kilometre wall of sand slicing through the SADR, leaving the Sahrawis to their mud brick hamlets in the remaining unclaimed terrain.

How much it cost to create the Berm is unknown, but during the long reign of King Hassan II, Morocco's military engineers toiled for almost a decade before it was complete. To deter the SADR's feared Polisario guerrillas from attacking it, a buffer was established running the Berm's entire length. 15 kilometres deep and sown with millions upon millions of land mines, it guarantees that simply approaching the Berm is impossible.

Of course, the Berm is also garrisoned. An interlocking chain of outposts and firebases are spread behind it, forming six impregnable

sectors able to withstand the most determined siege. The Royal Moroccan Army's size alone is in the neighbourhood of 200,000 men, with an additional 1,000 tanks (including 200 M1A1 Abrams) and several hundred artillery pieces at their disposal. There's no shortage of heavy machine guns, mortars, grenade launchers, recoilless rifles and anti-tank missiles either. The Royal Air Force too, while far from world class, isn't lacking in fire power. In short, Morocco can decimate the Sahrawis should they decide to test the Berm's impregnability.

The dire threat posed by Morocco's Berm forced the unthinkable on the Sahrawis and their own republic. To preserve itself from the king's arms, the entire apparatus of the SADR's government resides across the border in Algeria. Among six makeshift camps, each named after cities in the homeland (although one is called February 27 to commemorate the SADR's independence), are located the SADR's single party governance structure, alongside thousands of Sahrawi citizens waiting to go home. For as long as they reside in Algeria, this dispossessed nation, like the Palestinians or the unfortunate Rohingya, are more or less permanent refugees who can't even feed themselves in their desert shelters.

It's a sad impasse for a drama that unfolded in the latter half of the 20th century. Since 1975, the absolute monarchy of Morocco claimed the Western Sahara but this was contested by the region's own inhabitants, the Sahrawis, who were fighting under a nationalist rebel movement called the Polisario. The Moroccans never counted on the kind of fight the Polisario put up and the ensuing war lasted 16 years.

In 1991, the United Nations managed to impose a ceasefire and tried holding a referendum, which proved an exercise in futility that has frayed relations with the Sahrawis. In the meantime, the Berm rose from the ground,

AN EXILED COUNTRY

1884

Wanting to seize its own slice of Africa, Spain claims Río de Oro as a protectorate. The move is recognised in the Congress of Berlin in 1885. In 1904, Madrid annexes Saguia el Hamra along the Moroccan frontier.

1920-27

Tough Berber highlanders and Moroccan nationalists resist the Spanish Protectorate during the Rif War, where rugged tribesmen face the newly minted Foreign Legion under the command of Millan Astray.

1936

The Tercios de Extranjeros deploy to Spain as the civil war begins. Dubbed Los Legionarios, they serve under Francisco Franco's colourful 'Army of Africa' against leftist Republicans until 1939.

A Polisario Front soldier taking part in the 35th anniversary celebrations of the movement's Independence from Morocco



**“SINCE 1975 THE
ABSOLUTE MONARCHY
OF MOROCCO CLAIMED
THE WESTERN SAHARA
BUT THIS WAS CONTESTED
BY THE REGION’S OWN
INHABITANTS, THE
SAHRAWIS, WHO WERE
FIGHTING UNDER A
NATIONALIST REBEL
MOVEMENT CALLED
THE POLISARIO”**



defiant Sahrawis chose to flee and the bad blood runs deep and vengeful. But Morocco, the perpetrator of the outrage, doesn't seem to care.

The Spanish dynasty

Upon gaining independence in 1956, Morocco's people and its royal house regained a measure of dignity. Indeed, the previous 72 years were quite undignified. Once a regional power and a stronghold of Islam during Europe's middle ages, Morocco's star had been diminished by 1884, when Spain took its coastlines and imposed a protectorate. Then, Madrid's strategic calculus was more than sheer imperialism. Morocco was, after all, just a boat ride away from Gibraltar and the Andalusian coast and like the Moors in the 7th century, any invasion force from Africa could menace Spain – and Europe – by using the land of Morocco as a springboard.

Morocco's interior, however, was ceded to France, and two colonial regimes soon took hold. The French were very clever and allowed the Sultans to remain in power on the condition of oversight from a French governor. But in the lawless and uncharted deserts to the south, Spain wrested another slice of prime real estate for its overseas empire and called it the Rio de Oro. The land was valuable for its convenient proximity to the bountiful fishing grounds near the Canary Islands.

By 1946, Spain added the rectangular chunk of the Saguia el Hamra to the territory it named Spanish West Africa. By the 1950s, the threat of Moroccan nationalism and the sentiments among the desert-dwelling Sahrawis, who were aware they deserved independence, compelled Madrid's tightening of social controls. As with most colonies, propagating the Spanish language was an integral part of the whole enterprise and Sahrawis today maintain it as a second language.

An aborted invasion by a Moroccan 'Liberation Army' in 1957 and the peaceful Green March of 1974, didn't sway Spain's belief that the Western Sahara needed relinquishing.

Unknown to the colonial authorities, in 1973 a group of Sahrawi activists educated in Morocco formed an underground political party. Like other nationalist movements they adopted the moniker of a 'Liberation Front' and their goal was to take Saguia el Hamra and the Rio de Oro. Their acronym spelled POLISARIO and, with weapons dating back to World War II, they began the resistance against Spain.

Morocco's subsequent annexation of the Western Sahara that Spain evacuated in 1975, was an enduring preoccupation of King Hassan II. Belonging to the distinguished Alouite bloodline that traced its lineage to the Prophet Muhammad, King Hassan II's court in the capital of Rabat was smitten by the idea of "greater Morocco" occupying the African Maghreb.

"MORE THAN GUTS OR DARING, THE POLISARIO CONDUCTED THEIR MILITARY ACTIVITIES WITH REMARKABLE SKILL"

Unfortunately, when Rabat pressed its historic rights to Western Sahara, an inhospitable region with a distinctive population of Sahrawis, the International Court of Justice rejected these outright.

This didn't deter King Hassan II's army and air force from moving into Western Sahara and claiming its enormous phosphate deposits, believed to be some of the world's largest deposits that are essential to fertiliser production. Controlling the Bou Kraa mine, also known as the Bou Kraa, outside of El Aaiun was Morocco's biggest advertisement for its Western Sahara project. The mine fell under the state-owned Office Chérifien des Phosphates and boasts the longest conveyor belt in the world, stretching to the Atlantic coast. Morocco itself is recognised for its own billions of tons of domestic phosphate reserves.

A further incentive for the invasion was the potential revenue from undiscovered iron ore, titanium and maybe oil deposits in the desert.

With their country slipping away and being readied for wholesale plunder, the Polisario turned on its new enemy.

Cat and mouse in the desert

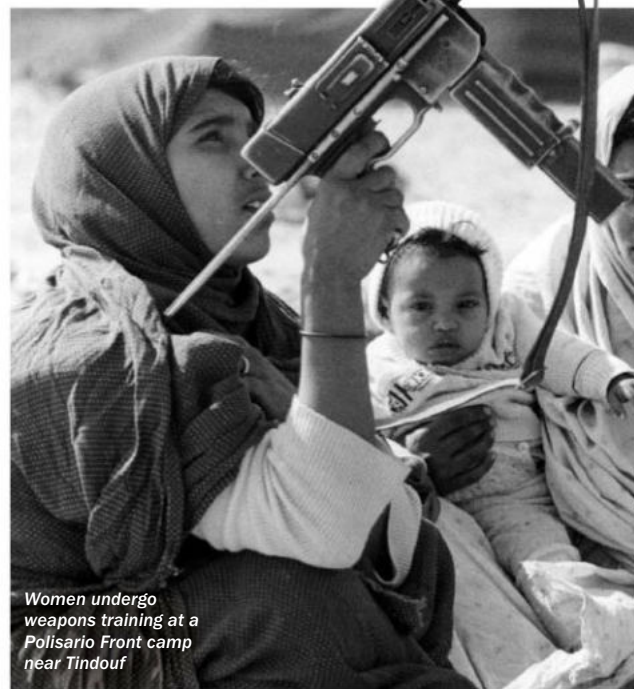
When thousands of Sahrawi were driven to the desert by invasion, the Polisario found a willing sponsor in Algeria, whose left-leaning government believed Morocco threatened its own borders. With the full backing of Algerian President Houari Boumediene, the Polisario re-established themselves in the remote Tindouf, not far from the Moroccan and West Saharan borders, and organised the Sahrawi People's Liberation Army as its armed forces. The Polisario adapted well to the task of freeing the Sahara. Persistent attacks from this safe haven eventually dislodged the Mauritians in 1978, who withdrew after a coup d'état in their country, and chipped away at Rabat's divisions, who had neither the equipment nor the resources to deploy and guard the desert.

More than guts or daring, the Polisario conducted their military activities with remarkable skill. After declaring the SADR's independence on 17 February 1976, the nature of the Polisario's war changed from guerrilla tactics to coordinated large-scale raids that wrote a whole new chapter in low-intensity mechanised warfare.

Though the literature on their order of battle and tactics is lacking, the war reportage at the time reveals the Polisario was able to create



A Sahrawi soldier poses with an array of mines, c.1997



Women undergo weapons training at a Polisario Front camp near Tindouf

1956

On 2 March, Morocco gains its independence after almost 80 years under European occupation. The French retreat to Algeria while Spain maintains its outposts in Ceuta and Melilla.

1957

Morocco attempts to seize Spanish Sahara with a 'Liberation Army' of volunteers. They are crushed within months by the joint Franco-Spanish counter-offensive called Operation Hurricane.

1960s

Ignoring the tide of decolonisation sweeping Africa, Madrid strengthens its grip on Spanish West Africa by forcing the Sahrawis into towns and government-run schools. The local camel population is culled to destroy nomadic livelihoods.



1973

On 10 May, radical university students in Ain Bentili, led by El-Ouali Mustafa Sayed, found the Polisario. Using whatever arms they can find, they attack a Spanish outpost and begin the long struggle for independence.

1974

Wishing to avoid a full-blown conflict with Spain, King Hassan II organises the Green March, gathering 350,000 of his subjects. Their goal is to symbolically claim the Spanish Sahara.



Above: More than a 100,000 destitute Sahrawi refugees live in the refugee cities of Western Algeria

a nimble and fluid command structure. Lacking tanks and artillery, the Land Rover and the Jeep became the primary transport to and from battle. Polisario formations moved at daybreak, their windshields removed to avoid the glare of sunlight and then concentrate their numbers on a specific target.

Even if their arms and ammunition were supplied by Algeria and Libya, more often than not it was the Moroccans themselves – in their haste to retreat and out of utter carelessness – who left provisions and equipment to the Polisario. Between 1976 and 1978 the Polisario amassed an impressive collection of howitzers, French armoured cars, Swiss light tanks, rifles and mortars as functioning spoils.

By January 1979, the Moroccans were on the verge of total defeat. Taking its name from their most ardent supporter, the Polisario's Boumediene Offensive forced the Royal Moroccan Army to abandon the Bukra mine and dig in at El Aaiun or Laayoune, the town passing for Western Sahara's regional capital. On 28 January, the Polisario brought the war inside Morocco, attacking Tantan and freeing Sahrawi prisoners. More than a slap in the face, this latest reversal shocked Morocco's leadership and threw King Hassan II's into Washington, DC's orbit.

Owing to his court's adeptness at diplomacy, Morocco enjoyed close ties with Tel Aviv, Riyadh and Paris. Each of these nominal allies either bailed out the royal court with loans or helped with military aid when it came to the Western Sahara quagmire.

The tipping point came in 1981, when several Moroccan aircraft were shot down within hours of each other. The shock of losing a modest but expensive fleet to Polisario anti-aircraft fire was so great, the Soviet spectre suddenly loomed over the Western Sahara and this is what drew the Americans to Rabat.

In hindsight, claims of Soviet interference in the Sahara were exaggerated. During the course of the war the Polisario received the 2K12 Kub and Strela-10 SAM systems together with Strela-2 MANPADs. Despite sources claiming the Polisario guerrillas received training in Cuba and Libya, it makes more sense for Algeria to have supplied these advanced weapons since it was the Polisario's main backer and sole quartermaster for most of the war.

From 1977 onward, US support for Morocco began to rise year-on-year in an ever growing financial crescendo. American military largesse peaked at \$1 billion in 1980, providing the



SPENGLER/REX/Shutterstock

SAHRAWI SECRET WEAPON

Right: Although the weapons systems are more than 30 years old, the 2K12 still poses a threat to Moroccan aircraft

The Polisario's meagre arsenal includes surviving 2K12 Kub SAMs, which have a maximum range of 24 kilometres. Designated by NATO as the SA-6 Gainful, the Kub was a popular air defence system among Soviet allies during the Cold War and was likely supplied by Algeria to the Sahrawis.



Sadat Aral/REX/Shutterstock

1975

Unwilling to give the Sahrawis a country of their own, on 14 November the Madrid Accords paves the way for nominal independence but leaves Western Sahara vulnerable to the Moroccans.

1976

With Western Sahara nearly overrun by Moroccan and Mauritanian troops, the Polisario Front declares the SADR's independence on 27 February. Within a decade, 70 countries recognise the fledgling state.

1978

Its army routed and in shambles, Mauritania withdraws from Western Sahara and leaves the fight to Morocco and the Polisario. The Sahrawi intensify the scope and range of their attacks.

1980

Having lost their desert bases and garrisons, the Moroccan army retreats to El Aaiun where they try defending the Bukra phosphate mine, whose operations have ceased. Algeria is blamed for meddling in the war.



1980

King Hassan II now leans closer than ever before to the US for military assistance, which peaks at \$1 million a day. Aerial refuelling tankers, surveillance equipment and special forces training are given to Morocco.

Moroccan army thousands of M113 APCs, hundreds of M60A3 tanks and M109 self-propelled howitzers and squadrons of new aircraft, including refuelling tankers to enhance fighter cover in the desert.

As Morocco's dreaded Berm took shape, the US supplied helicopters, trucks and ground surveillance radars (which malfunctioned in the desert heat), along with Green Berets to advise the Moroccans on counter-insurgency.

The future for the SADR

Not to be outdone by the Moroccan Berm, the Polisario adjusted their tactics to exploit weaknesses in their enemy's plans. To avoid being easy targets for Moroccan air support, the Polisario launched major night-time operations against poorly defended outposts. One particular battle in 1987 involved at least three mechanised battalions using Soviet-made BMP-1s and BRDMs supported by tanks. Having overrun the defenders at a place called Al Farssia near the Tindouf frontier, the Polisario then readied an ambush for the approaching reinforcements and inflicted more losses.

As a testament to the Polisario's skill, years earlier in October 1981 an entire Moroccan brigade was annihilated while defending Guelta Zemmur at the southern half of the Berm. Along with so many other small battles, throughout the war the Polisario emerged as the clear victor on a tactical level. This is more astounding since their manpower never exceeded 20,000 fighters. For an organisation that solicited so much aid from the Communist Bloc, the Polisario never resorted to outright terrorism or targeted Moroccan civilians. At the very least, there is scant proof of the Polisario's excesses.

Polisario and the SADR scored points against Rabat in foreign affairs. Against the odds, the SADR established diplomatic relations and recognition from 74 countries, many of who in the African Union rejected Rabat's presence in the Western Sahara.

In a final gesture of mature statecraft, the SADR complied with the UN-backed ceasefire on 6 September 1991. This ended the Polisario's war against Morocco and there have been no attacks on the Berm since. A lasting solution to the Western Sahara should have

“AS A TESTAMENT TO THE POLISARIO’S SKILL, YEARS EARLIER IN OCTOBER 1981, AN ENTIRE MOROCCAN BRIGADE WAS ANNIHILATED WHILE DEFENDING GUELTA ZEMMUR”



Polisario soldiers on parade, c. 1980



Sahrawi soldiers on parade during Independence Day celebrations in Western Algeria

1981

In another stunning reversal against the Polisario, a pitched battle in Galtah Zammur leads to the Moroccan air force's worst casualties. Soviet-made SA-6 missiles allegedly down two Mirage F-1s, an F-5 multirole fighter and two transport planes.

1987

The Moroccan army finishes the Berm. It immediately hampers the Polisario's movements and brings the war to a stalemate. Funding from Algeria and Libya begins to wane.

1991

A series of intense battles compel the UN mission in Sahara, MINURSO, to impose a ceasefire. This marks an unofficial end to hostilities and the beginning of a planned referendum.

2010

On 8 November, Moroccan security forces assault the Gdeim Izik protest camp in the city of El Aaiun. Fearing for their lives, the organisers relocate to Algeria.

2016

After battling cancer for several years, SADR President Mohammed Abdelaziz passes away in the US. The Sahrawi government announces a 40-day period of mourning.

2016

On 6 August, newly-elected President Brahim Ghali assumes the leadership of the SADR. Days later he declares that an armed fight, "...is a national duty for all Sahrawis."



Craig Easton/REX/Shutterstock

A Sahrawi soldier inspects a line of Browning M2 machine guns. Most of the Sahrawi arsenal is outdated or in questionable condition



followed, but the ambitious plan to audit and register Sahrawi voters for an independence referendum the UN called MINURSO was undermined for years by Moroccan subterfuge. Two decades and 1 billion dollars later, the referendum appears to have failed, and Rabat's grip on Western Sahara's people and resources remains uncontested.

This could be Hassan II's legacy to his son, Mohammed VI, who became king after his father passed away in 1999. With the Berm secure and the Polisario population trapped in their dusty refugee camps, King Mohammed VI didn't have to contend with the stress or cost of fighting a protracted war.

But the Sahrawis remain angry. Visitors to their camps in the Tindouf region, who require screening and credentials weeks beforehand, are served a familiar program involving a media tour, visits with local Polisario officials, a drive between the camps and unfailing hospitality involving banquets and sweet tea. On special occasions, the Polisario send their old tanks and BM-21 rocket launchers on parade in the open desert.

If anything, these activities showcase the superb organisation of the SADR's current government. Caught between survival and homelessness, the Sahrawis are resourceful to a fault. Families build small garden plots in the desert to supplement a steady diet of food aid provided by Europe, the US, and the UN. Cottage industries, education, and healthcare is available for the 80,000 Sahrawis in the 'capital' of Rabouni and in camps such as Laayoune, Smaara, Auserd and Dakhla – all of which are named after real cities located behind the Berm.

Alas, in the words of the French journalist Claude Moniquet, the Polisario are "losing speed" as its external support and legal options continue to dwindle. With the future referendum far from a certainty, an estimated 160,000 Sahrawis across Western Sahara and Tindouf have no hope of ever returning to their home. Restarting the fight with Morocco seems foolhardy, since the Polisario's armed forces number about 6,000-strong and their weapons are far from adequate compared with the Moroccan army today.

When another Polisario veteran, Brahim Ghali, assumed the SADR's leadership in August 2016, two months after long-time President Mohammed Abdelaziz succumbed to cancer, he repeated a familiar dictum with surprising dignity. The Polisario must strengthen its armed forces for any eventuality, Ghali insisted, as if hinting at an upcoming reckoning with the Moroccans. It's terrifying to contemplate how, sooner rather than later, the war might start again.

FURTHER READING

- ★ THE STRUGGLE FOR THE WESTERN SAHARA BY BARBARA HERRELL-BOND
- ★ THE POLISARIO FRONT-A DESTABILISING FORCE IN THE REGION THAT IS STILL ACTIVE BY CLAUDE MONIQUET/ESISC
- ★ WAR AND INSURGENCY IN THE WESTERN SAHARA BY US ARMY STRATEGIC STUDIES INSTITUTE
- ★ WESTERN SAHARA: WAR, NATIONALISM, AND CONFLICT IRRESOLUTION BY STEPHEN ZUNES AND JACOB MUNDY

WALLS OF SHAME

On the defensive from withering surprise attacks, Morocco resorted to brute engineering in its struggle against the Polisario. Beginning with a circular perimeter around El Aaiun in 1981, thousands of soldiers were tasked with adding fortified layers that allowed the army to hold its ground.

To hasten the work a bulldozer was used for unearthing soil, which was piled onto an embankment reaching three meters tall, then topped with barbed wire, sensors and machine gun nests overlooking a minefield.

Since 1987 it was believed that more than 150,000 Moroccan soldiers were stationed along the Berm, which stretched from coastal Mauritania to the Algerian frontier.

"MOROCCO RESORTED TO BRUTE ENGINEERING IN ITS STRUGGLE AGAINST THE POLISARIO"



Images: Alamy, Getty, Shutterstock

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Heroes of the Reich

GEORG MEISER

This NCO in the 119th Reserve Infantry Regiment became famous for his bravery in dozens of daring trench raids and patrols in No Man's Land

WORDS ROB SCHÄFER

The 119th Reserve Infantry Regiment from Württemberg was mobilised just after the outbreak of war, on 2 August 1914, after which it took part in the invasion of France before moving to the Somme in September 1914. After some brisk actions against the French Army at Orvillers and La Boisselle, the regiment finally settled in the area of Beaumont in May 1915; a position it would continue to hold throughout the Battle of the Somme.

Life at this sector of the front had been relatively quiet, a situation that changed when the British took over from the French in the summer of 1915. Nevertheless, the Germans never ceased trying to dominate No Man's Land with all means available. Nearly every night, small specialist units of men went out into the wasteland between the lines to gather intelligence, bring in prisoners and to cause as much carnage as they possibly could. By evaluating and applying the lessons learned during these raids, the units of XIV Reserve Corps, the 119th Reserve Infantry Regiment among them, soon became highly proficient in conducting these kind of operations in which the German regiments generally kept the upper end over their British adversaries.

A raid, launched by 75 men of II Battalion RIR119 on the night of 6 April 1916 in the Beaumont-Hamel area near Y-Ravine, caused the British 112 casualties. The German raiders would lose three men and have one seriously wounded. The men who conducted these daring raids and patrols were always volunteers and usually there was no shortage of them. A successful patrol in which enemy soldiers were

killed or taken prisoner and which managed to obtain important intelligence was guaranteed to be rewarded with a medal or even a promotion. Patrols and raids were seen as a means to keep the men keen, active and motivated, and many regiments awarded decorative commendation certificates for successful patrols and raids to encourage volunteers.

Many German soldiers specialised themselves in the art of raiding and patrolling as the dangerous forays into No Man's Land were a means to gather fame, promotions and awards quickly. Many achieved legendary status within their regiments and even in the entire army. They were often spared from regular duty and, contrary to our 21st century view of the soldier of World War I, often enjoyed the excitement and adrenaline rush of battle.

One of these men was Georg Meiser from Gründelhardt in Württemberg, who served with the 119th Reserve Infantry Regiment. Meiser had been with the regiment from the start and by mid-1915, was a seasoned veteran with a reputation for reckless bravery. Having been decorated with the Iron Cross in autumn 1914, he received the much rarer 1st Class of the coveted cross in summer 1915.

"On 14 September, Unteroffizier Meiser, then still a Gefreiter, has already been decorated with the Iron Cross 2nd Class for capturing an enemy ammunition wagon near Rougville. With his daring courage and devotion, Meiser has made a name for himself. Wherever there was a call for volunteers, Meiser always stood in front. Since then, he has harassed the enemy on countless, reckless patrols. Leading a sentry patrol at the

road Serre-Mailly on 6 June 1915, he has brought in two French prisoners and captured an enemy machine gun and a stash of enemy trench maps. For this deed, I recommend Unteroffizier Meiser to be decorated with the Iron Cross 1st Class."

Obt R Anton Mühlbayer, 9./RIR119, 15 June 1915

In October that year, Meiser went out into No Man's Land again. It was to be his final patrol.

"On 22 October 1915, I volunteered to join an armed patrol under command of Unteroffizier Meiser. In addition, Ersatz-Reservist Reinhold Hähnle, Ersatz-Reservist Phillip Knies and Reservist Wilhelm Vitzer participated in the operation. Our task was to secure No Man's Land against forays of enemy patrols.

At 7pm, our patrol left the trenches in section C3. In the vicinity of Hawthorn Ridge, we spotted an enemy patrol, five men strong, in a distance of about 20 metres. It was unclear where they were heading to, but Uffz Meiser made it clear that he wanted to catch the enemy from the rear. Shortly before we had reached the right position we were suddenly taken under short-range fire from some nearby shell craters. Shortly afterwards, English infantry – about 40-60 men strong – charged us from the left and right. The way towards our own lines had been cut off. Without hesitation, Uffz Meiser gave the order to charge the foe to our left and to fight our way through. While charging, we covered the enemy with a volley of hand grenades. The effect did not fail to materialise and a number Englishmen went down.

Due to our position, the English behind us had to hold their fire as otherwise they would have

**"WILLING TO SACRIFICE
THEMSELVES, THE NIGHTLY
HUNTERS PROWLED THEIR
DANGEROUS HUNTING
GROUNDS - WHERE
DEATH LURKED"**

"The narrow piece of earth which stretched between the barbed wire entanglements and which during the day was deserted and lifeless, became alive during the nights when dark silhouettes crawled, listening from their trenches, to hunt their human prey... Bad weather, storm, and rain would not stop them, neither could the light of the moon or the freezing cold. Willing to sacrifice themselves, the nightly hunters prowled their dangerous hunting grounds - where death lurked."

*Regimental History of
the 119th Reserve
Infantry Regiment*



*Vizefeldwebel Georg
Meiser in March 1916,
proudly displaying his
bravery awards*

"I ENGAGED IN CLOSE COMBAT WITH THE ENGLISH. ONE RAMMED HIS BAYONET INTO MY LEFT THIGH, BUT BEFORE HE COULD LUNGE AGAIN ERSATZ-RESERVIST HÄHNLE HAD STRUCK HIM DOWN WITH A BLOW OF HIS SPADE"



A German trench-raiding patrol navigates their own barbed wire defences on the Western Front, c.1916

risked hitting their own men in front of us. Meiser charged ahead and struck an English officer down with his rifle butt. Dropping the rifle, he then drew his pistol and fired a number of shots on two other Englishmen. One was mortally hit while the other fell backwards into a shell crater.

Shortly after that, I engaged in close combat with the English. One rammed his bayonet into my left thigh, but before he could lunge again Ersatz-Reservist Hähnle had struck him down with a blow of his spade. All of this did not last longer than four or five minutes. In this moment, I noticed that Uffz Meiser was bleeding profusely from a wound to his chest. Now that we had broken through the English ranks, we retreated, fighting towards our own lines, continuously firing at the Englishmen that were chasing us.

By now we could hear the sound of whistles from the direction of our own lines, a clear sign that our unfortunate situation had been understood. Now it was imperative to hold out as long as possible. In the meantime, Uffz Meiser had picked up an English rifle and, even though he was severely wounded, directed well-aimed

fire at the advancing enemy. Ersatz-Reservist Hähnle was shot in the stomach and had to be dragged back by Reservist Vitzer and myself. Shortly afterwards, the comrades in our position opened fire on the English and finally the enemy began to retreat. We had battled against a force ten times superior to our own and had managed to wound and kill at least a dozen Englishmen. Ersatz-Reservist Hähnle succumbed to his severe wound shortly afterwards. Uffz Meiser and I were transported to Feldlazarett 9 at Beaumont."

Witness statement of Kriegsfreiwilliger Hermann Baun, 9./RIR119

For his repeated courage under fire, Georg Meiser was recommended to be decorated with the Golden Medal of Military Merit, the Kingdom of Württemberg's highest bravery award for enlisted men and NCOs.

"On 22 October 1915, Unteroffizier Meiser (9./RIR119) led an armed patrol in strength of five men into No Man's Land on the Hawthorn Ridge near Beaumont. At 8.30pm, Meiser's group

was ambushed and cut off by a numerically far superior enemy force (40-60 men). Neglecting this superiority, Meiser threw his small group against the foe to force a breakthrough towards the German lines.

Even though Meiser and two of his men (Reservist Hähnle and Kriegsfreiwilliger Baun) had been severely wounded, he managed to lead his men back to our own lines while dragging the unconscious Hähnle with them. During the fighting retreat, they inflicted at least 12-15 bloody casualties on the enemy.

Since the start of the war, Meiser has proven himself in countless, daring operations and as an NCO he is extraordinarily popular with the men of his company. Since December 1914, he has voluntarily participated in more than 50 patrols and was decorated with the Iron Cross 1st Class on 3 August 1915. For this reason, I recommend to award Meiser with a promotion to Vizefeldwebel and to decorate him the Golden Medal of Military Merit."

Major Schäfer, III Reserve-Infanterie-Regiment Nr 119, 7 November 1915

The award was confirmed and Meiser finally received it from the hands of his king in March 1916. By then, he had already transformed into a reluctant and bitter hero. The chest wound he had received during action had made him unfit to continue his service in the front lines. Being fit to do garrison duty only, he had been transferred back to the replacement battalion in Württemberg where he tasked to train recruits for the regiment. For a trench fighter like Meiser, always striving for promotion, this came as a severe blow.

"In regards to my final rank of überzähliger (surplus) Vizefeldwebel, I have to add that I was put in for promotion to Vizefeldwebel a number of times, by both by my battalion commander in the field and by my Hauptmann, but according to the commander of the 119th replacement battalion, I could not be promoted as I was fit for garrison duty only. Why was I only fit to do garrison duty? Because I was stupid enough to lead my five men against 20 Englishmen (this is according to the regimental history, in reality there were more than 40), which we had already taunted a number of times before by mounting bells to the enemy wire, slipping past their patrols to plaster their trenches with grenades, entering their trenches to steal their newspapers and one day we even managed to steal 6 English horses,

The articles of war are nothing but a travesty, Those men displaying bravery in the face of the enemy are supposed to be able to climb to the highest ranks in the army? Yes – maybe those whose fathers's wallets allow them to study at university. Proof? The other night, after I was wounded, one of those gentlemen took the lead and when the English arrived, he took to his heels and in his panic, he took 16 men back with him. Two men of my patrol remained, they stood their ground and they managed to shoot the English leader.

As a reward, they were made into surplus Gefreite – the chap to run away with 16 of his men was promoted to Leutnant six weeks later. Personally, I never volunteered for anything anymore, as did many others. Such treatment sparked revolutionary thoughts in even the bravest of comrades. No reward up until today. Only hate and envy as in the old days."

Georg Meiser in a letter to the war archives in Württemberg, 30 January 1937

"SUCH TREATMENT SPARKED REVOLUTIONARY THOUGHTS IN EVEN THE BRAVEST OF COMRADES. NO REWARD UP UNTIL TODAY. ONLY HATE AND ENVY AS IN THE OLD DAYS"

Left: Commendation certificate for leading a highly successful patrol against the enemy, Unteroffizier Karl Becker of the 125th Landwehr-Infantry-Regiment



Left: The Golden Medal of Military Merit of the Kingdom of Württemberg



Above and below: An exhausted soldier of the 16th Storm Battalion after returning from a patrol in 1917. His uniform is torn by barbed wire



Images: Alamy

MAC

WORDS LEIGH NEVILLE

A US Army Special Forces captain contacts his base camp by radio while Vietnamese soldiers burn down a Vietcong hideout

1 SOG



Above:
Unofficial
insignia of
MACV-SOG

Embroiled in a secret campaign, hidden within the wider Vietnam War, even the name of this special forces unit remained highly classified

Their missions were secret, some remain so even to this day. Many of the special operations soldiers, sailors and Marines who conducted them took their stories to the grave. Their existence and the incredible operations they conducted were only officially acknowledged in 2001 after years of lobbying by SOG (Special Operations Group) veterans.

Like everything to do with SOG, their beginning was cloaked in secrecy. In 1961, US President John Kennedy ordered the CIA to begin establishing what he called “networks of resistance” in communist North Vietnam. The CIA was assigned the task of running covert operations within the region, including inserting undercover agents into the north and carrying out cross-border reconnaissance missions.

The CIA officers who initially undertook these missions were trained by US Army Green Berets and US Navy SEALs, but the officer running the programme was largely unsuccessful and the majority of agents were uncovered and suffered a terrible fate at the hands of the North Vietnamese Army (NVA). With the failure of the CIA programme, these covert operations were instead handed to the United States military in late 1963.

To conduct these special missions, the army established the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam-Studies and Observations Group or MACV-SOG, in January 1964. Its innocuous and lengthy title was part of an elaborate cover story to deceive the North Vietnamese and their Chinese/Soviet allies. According to the cover story, MACV-SOG was something of a knowledge-management ‘think-tank’, dedicated to analysing and disseminating operational ‘lessons-learned’ across the US military in South Vietnam.

To insiders though, the initials SOG stood instead for Special Operations Group. MACV-SOG would soon become the most lethal, effective and covert special operations unit within the war. The largest and most well known element of SOG was the Ground Studies Group,

which launched commando teams into North Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia on what were known as strategic reconnaissance missions.

The Army Special Forces were no strangers to cross-border operations. Green Berets assigned to the Military Advisory Assistance Group had been training irregular anti-communist forces in Laos since 1961. Along with Green Berets, who made up the majority of the Ground Studies Group, SOG recruited Navy SEALs, Marine Force Recon and Air Force Special Tactics operators.

These men were then given cover stories and personnel records to match, and assigned to one of three separate regional commands; Command and Control North (CCN), Command and Control South (CCS) or Command and Control Central (CCC).

SOG also established its own air wing – the Air Studies Group – that included surveillance and transport aircraft rigged for parachuting, along with unmarked helicopters that were equipped with a unique extraction system known as STABO. This saw operators literally hooked onto a winch and lifted out of the jungle.

For seaborne insertions, including into North Vietnam’s Haiphong Harbour, the SOG created the Maritime Studies Group with 16 high-speed racing boats affectionately called Nasty Class Fast Patrol Boats. These could carry sea mines and torpedoes along with commando teams. The unit’s historian described these Norwegian-built craft as capable of an impressive, “...44 knots at 75 tons displacement [with] a cruising range of approximately 725 kilometres.”

The Psychological Studies Group were in charge of the psychological operations, or psy-ops, component of MACV-SOG. This group would pioneer the use of airborne broadcasting of propaganda, along with the use of spoofed broadcasting stations claimed to be based in the North itself – though in reality broadcasting from Saigon. This mysterious group also managed one of the biggest deception campaigns since World War II.

**“MACV-SOG WOULD SOON
BECOME THE MOST LETHAL,
EFFECTIVE AND COVERT
SPECIAL OPERATIONS UNIT
WITHIN THE WAR”**



*Above:
Chinese
Nung mercenaries
working for MACV-SOG
Command and Control North*

The largest component of SOG was the Ground Studies Branch's Reconnaissance Teams (RTs) or Spike Teams. These RTs were colourfully named after types of snakes or American states, such as RT Idaho or RT Diamondback. A typical mission would see either a six or 12-man RT deployed. Of these, only three soldiers would be American – the team leader, assistant team leader and a radio operator. The remainder comprised indigenous soldiers, often Chinese Nung mercenaries or Montagnard hill tribesmen, who were especially skilled jungle fighters.

The RTs operated under Project Shining Brass, which saw joint US and South Vietnamese teams infiltrate up to 50 kilometres inside of Laos. Along with their primary reconnaissance mission, these RTs also conducted downed pilot and POW recoveries. Operations were soon expanded to include missions into neighbouring Cambodia under Project Daniel Boone. Cambodia had quietly become a major staging area and sanctuary for North Vietnamese and Viet Cong (VC) forces.

These cross-border operations were always deniable for all parties involved. The North Vietnamese swore none of its troops ever entered Laos and Cambodia, while the Americans denied even the very existence of SOG and its recon teams. This denial continued long after the war.

The SOG's primary role was to target the infamous Ho Chi Minh Trail. Since they were often bombed crossing into South Vietnam from the North, the NVA and Main Force VC would use a network of trails, roads and tracks in neighbouring Laos instead that all were, officially at least, neutral. The Ho Chi Minh Trail offered them respite from American bombing – or so they thought.

Along with troop movements, the Ho Chi Minh Trail was instrumental in resupplying the North Vietnamese regulars fighting in the South, along with supporting Viet Cong guerrilla units with weapons and ammunition. These supplies were often carried by truck but bicycles, ox-carts and even elephants were also pressed into service.

The trail became ever more sophisticated with its own air defence gun batteries and SA-2 surface to air missiles. The North Vietnamese even stationed specialist engineer units along the trail who were responsible for its upkeep and repair. For the South Vietnamese and



TIGER FORCE

Tiger Force was the nickname given to a 'Lurp' or long range reconnaissance patrol (LRRP) platoon of the storied 101st Airborne Division. Its charismatic leader, Colonel David Hackworth, later gained fame through his political and military writings. During the Vietnam War, Tiger Force was considered a particularly effective unit, although it suffered heavy casualties. Indeed, like SOG, it was awarded its own Presidential Unit Citation.

The unit was, like many in Vietnam, unofficially recognised because of its high body count. This fact alone should have triggered warning bells. LRRPs, again like the SOG, traditionally attempted to bypass and avoid contact with the enemy due to their small numbers, relying on stealth and guile.

Members of the Tiger Force platoon on patrol. Note the second soldier dressed as a Viet Cong guerrilla

Instead, a culture of barbarism seemed to take over the unit.

Allegations spread of the routine murder of civilians; the widespread torture and execution of prisoners; the mutilation, scalping and cutting off the ears of enemy dead; and several other incidents too horrible to mention. The unit was eventually scrutinised in what became the longest running investigation into war crimes during the conflict. Incredibly, none of the soldiers was ever charged.

Hackworth denies to this day any knowledge of these alleged atrocities and war crimes committed by men formerly under his command (he had moved to another posting before the reported atrocities began). In 2003, when faced with the accusations against his former unit, he allegedly told journalists that, "...every US bomb or rocket that struck a city or a village killing non-combatants was a war crime. Who investigated this?"

"THE UNIT WAS EVENTUALLY SCRUTINISED IN WHAT BECAME THE LONGEST RUNNING INVESTIGATION INTO WAR CRIMES DURING THE CONFLICT"





CLANDESTINE OPERATIONS

MACV-SOG CONDUCTED SOME OF THE MOST HAIR-RAISING COVERT MISSIONS IN THE HISTORY OF SPECIAL OPERATIONS

Americans, it was a unique challenge. Much of the trail was concealed from the air by thick jungle canopy, while other, more exposed, portions were camouflaged daily by the NVA.

MACV-SOG was given the mission to carry out strategic reconnaissance of the trail, surveilling choke points that could be targeted by secret US airstrikes and providing on-the-ground bomb damage assessments to the US Air Force. They also targeted specific high ranking individuals – like NVA officers or VC tax collectors – that intelligence indicted who would be travelling on the trail, for death or capture.

On these operations, the RTs carried nothing that could conclusively prove they were indeed American soldiers – their uniforms were locally made, their weapons were of foreign manufacture and they carried no identification or dog tags. Some teams even carried captured AK-47s and wore NVA fatigues to confuse the enemy (as they were so far from other US forces, the risk of friendly fire was minimised).

These teams also used a large number of exotic weapons. At least one SOG operator

An American soldier applies a makeshift bandage outside the US Special Forces camp at Ben Het



HO CHI MINH TRAIL

The Ho Chi Minh Trail ran almost 1,600 kilometres from North Vietnam through Laos and ends near the South Vietnamese capital of Saigon (now Ho Chi Minh City). MACV-SOG teams routinely conducted reconnaissance and surveillance on the trail, guiding in US bombing raids to target logistics convoys and troop movements.

BATTLE OF KHE SANH

Khe Sanh was the site of one of SOG's most famous battles – the last stand of RT Kansas. Sent in to capture a prisoner, the 14-man team ended up holding off an NVA regiment, suffering nine dead, before the timely arrival of helicopter gunships broke the back of the human wave assault.

COMMAND & CONTROL NORTH

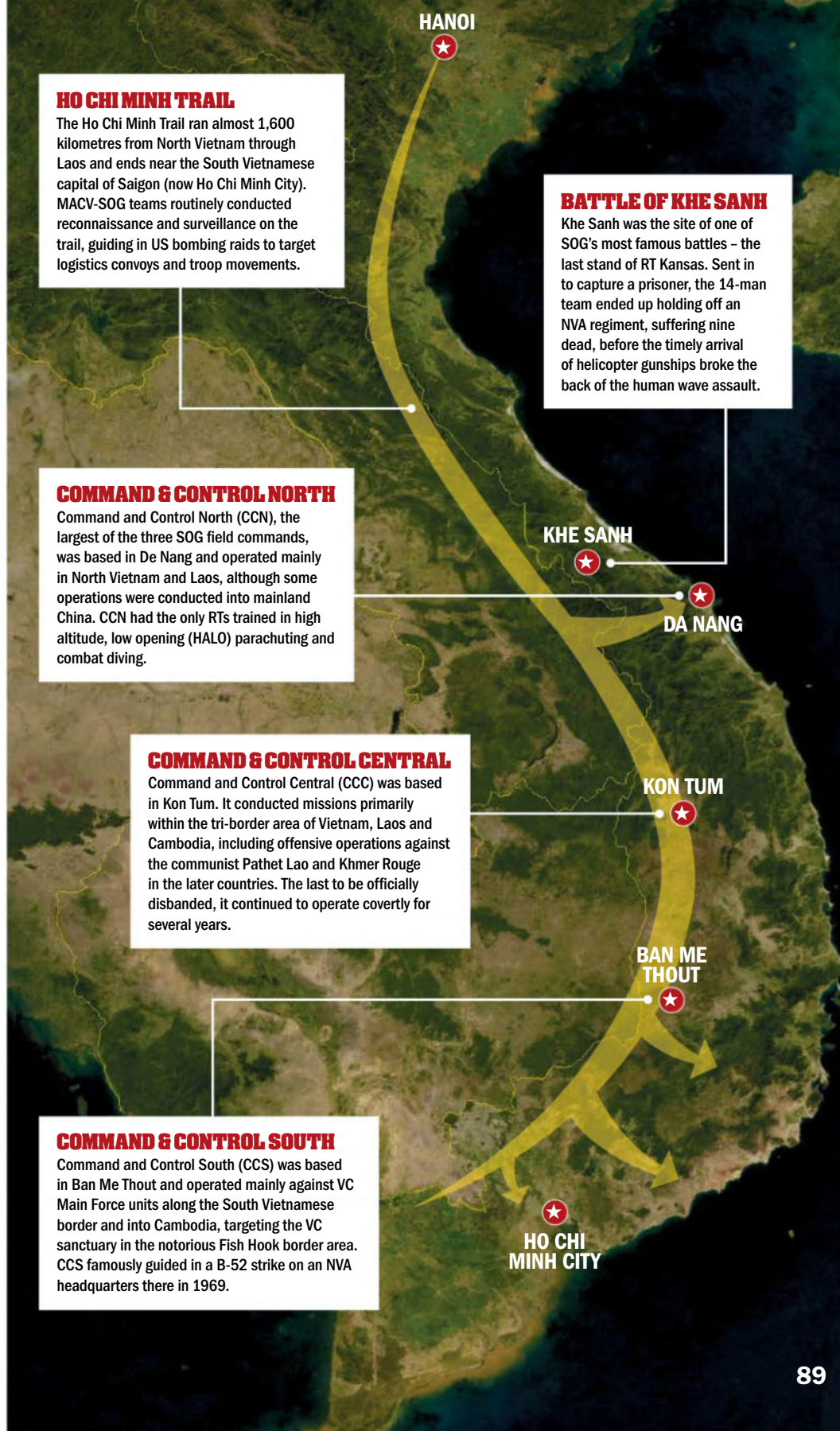
Command and Control North (CCN), the largest of the three SOG field commands, was based in De Nang and operated mainly in North Vietnam and Laos, although some operations were conducted into mainland China. CCN had the only RTs trained in high altitude, low opening (HALO) parachuting and combat diving.

COMMAND & CONTROL CENTRAL

Command and Control Central (CCC) was based in Kon Tum. It conducted missions primarily within the tri-border area of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, including offensive operations against the communist Pathet Lao and Khmer Rouge in the later countries. The last to be officially disbanded, it continued to operate covertly for several years.

COMMAND & CONTROL SOUTH

Command and Control South (CCS) was based in Ban Me Thout and operated mainly against VC Main Force units along the South Vietnamese border and into Cambodia, targeting the VC sanctuary in the notorious Fish Hook border area. CCS famously guided in a B-52 strike on an NVA headquarters there in 1969.



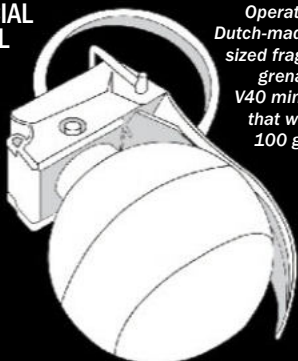


JUNGLE SURVIVAL

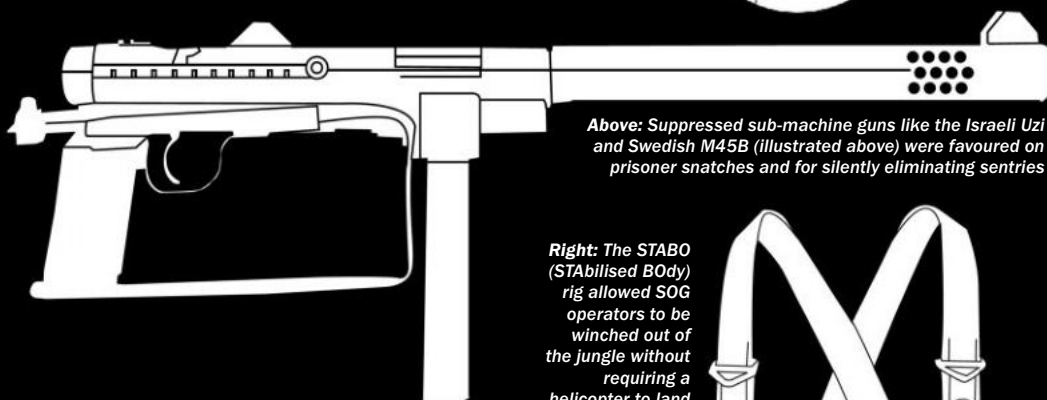
OUTNUMBERED AND OUTGUNNED, SOG USED SPECIAL EQUIPMENT TO TRY TO EVEN THE ODDS OF SURVIVAL

The weapons and equipment carried by the RTs were designed to accomplish two things – aid them in covertly inserting into an area, and to help them get out, particularly if an NVA reaction force was on their trail. The tiny RTs would be vastly outnumbered and needed every trick up their sleeve to discourage and slow pursuit until they could reach a safe landing zone.

Many of today's special operations techniques were invented, tried and tested in the jungles of Vietnam by the SOG. HALO parachuting, combat SCUBA and fast roping from a helicopter were all pioneered by the SOG.

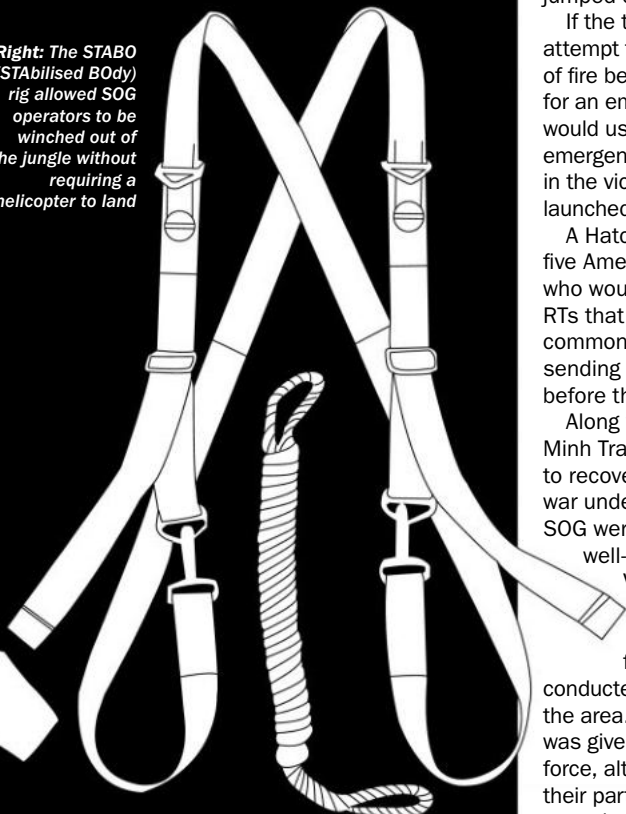


Operators carried Dutch-made golf ball-sized fragmentation grenades called V40 mini-grenades that weighed just 100 grams each



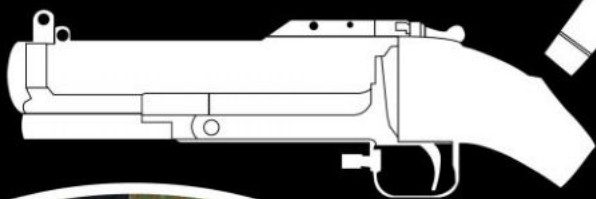
Above: Suppressed sub-machine guns like the Israeli Uzi and Swedish M45B (illustrated above) were favoured on prisoner snatches and for silently eliminating sentries

Right: The STABO (STAbilised BOdy) rig allowed SOG operators to be winched out of the jungle without requiring a helicopter to land



“MANY OF TODAY’S SPECIAL OPERATIONS TECHNIQUES WERE INVENTED, TRIED AND TESTED IN THE JUNGLES OF VIETNAM BY THE SOG”

Below: SOG used cut down M79 grenade launchers with the stock and much of the barrel sawn off to reduce weight



Below: M18A1 Claymore Directional Mines were carried to protect remain-overnight positions and to set as booby-traps for pursuing NVA



Operators wore locally manufactured, non-US issue tiger stripe pattern camouflage fatigues to help them blend in with the jungle

carried a futuristic 13mm Gyrojet Rocket Pistol as his sidearm, while another routinely totted a hunting bow (and used it in at least one firefight). Other weapons were highly modified for their unique needs – an M60 medium machine gun, for instance, was fitted with a Predator-style 500-round backpack and dubbed the ‘Death Machine’.

The small teams needed all of the firepower they could carry, as they would typically end up in firefights with enemy units of far larger size. In fact, the RTs would do everything in their power to avoid a confrontation, preferring stealth over force. A perfect SOG mission would often involve zero contact with the enemy, with the RTs operating as the silent eyes and ears of the covert US bombing campaigns.

The NVA responded to the SOG missions with Chinese-trained hunter-killer units accompanied by tracking dogs. One SOG veteran, Frank Capper, remembered that, “...they’d have these hunter-killer units sitting on the primary and secondary insertion points, just waiting for us to arrive. We had teams get hit as soon as they jumped off the bird – totally destroyed.”

If the teams couldn’t avoid contact, they would attempt to overwhelm the enemy with weight of fire before breaking contact and heading for an emergency landing zone. The operators would use their radio to declare a ‘Prairie Fire’ emergency that would summon any US aircraft in the vicinity to assist, while a Hachet Force launched to pull the compromised team out.

A Hachet Force was typically comprised of five Americans and 30 indigenous soldiers, who would launch by helicopter to rescue RTs that had run into trouble. It was relatively commonplace for RTs to simply vanish after sending a contact report, wiped out to a man before the Hachet Force could respond.

Along with their missions along the Ho Chi Minh Trail, SOG conducted rescue operations to recover downed US aircrew and prisoners of war under Operation Bright Light. Intriguingly, SOG were not involved in perhaps the most well-known POW rescue mission of the Vietnam War.

The famous Son Tay mission in November 1970 seemed a perfect fit for SOG – CCN in particular – who had conducted secret reconnaissance missions in the area. It isn’t known why the rescue operation was given to a newly established one-off task force, although inter-service politics likely played their part. In any case, the POWs had been moved and the raid was unsuccessful.

In a curious twist of fate, many of the Chinese military advisers who had trained and led the North Vietnamese hunter-killer teams were quartered in a secondary school located near the Son Tay prison. It was assaulted by the US raiders to stave off any interference

“THE NVA RESPONDED TO THE SOG MISSIONS WITH CHINESE TRAINED HUNTER-KILLER UNITS EQUIPPED WITH TRACKING DOGS”



A group of Montagnards show off the severed heads of Vietcong they have collected, 1963



Above: US Army Special Forces train indigenous personnel in small arms



A Chinook lifts off from Command and Control Central base in Kon Tum

with the main rescue mission, killing the majority of the Chinese training cadre.

Even more in the shadows, SOG conducted some of the most audacious and fascinating psy-ops missions of the war. In perhaps the Psychological Studies Group's finest hour, the legend of the Sacred Sword of the Patriots League (SSPL) was created. The objective? To convince the North Vietnamese people that an entirely fictional, anti-communist resistance group was alive, well and flourishing in North Vietnam.

Using covert radio broadcasts, airborne leaflet drops and faked SSPL membership cards, the story of a 10,000-strong resistance front was gradually developed. SOG recon teams would plant fake SSPL documents on the bodies of NVA they killed in ambushes to sow seeds of doubt and mistrust. Radio sets rigged to only play SSPL propaganda stations were even covertly distributed to villages in the North.

Perhaps the most successful SSPL campaign saw the Psychological Studies Group mail thousands of expertly faked letters alleging involvement in the SSPL to North Vietnamese officers and communist party officials. Spies reported that at least some of those who received the letters were later relieved of their duties.

Their most audacious psy-op, however, was undoubtedly known as Paradise Island. Indigenous SOG operators from the Maritime

Studies Group would interdict North Vietnamese fishing boats, seizing the crews and transporting them, blindfolded, to a secret island location.

There they were told that they had been captured by the SSPL and held for a short time. During the three weeks or so of captivity, the fishermen were treated to medical and dental care for any ailments, given new clothes, and fed well and often – in stark contrast to their lives in North Vietnam.

When they were released, they were supplied with gifts including an SSPL radio set to take home with them. Some were trained as double-agents, others were simply told to tell their families and villages of the fair treatment of the SSPL. Although Paradise Island may have had some successes, at least some fishermen planned their re-capture by SOG, as they apparently enjoyed the all-expenses paid holiday.

MACV-SOG officially operated between 1964 and 1972, when US efforts began to focus on the drawdown of US forces in Vietnam and the eventual transition of the war to the South Vietnamese. SOG was credited with severely impeding the resupply of enemy forces in South Vietnam along the Ho Chi Minh Trail, capturing and killing large numbers of high value targets and spreading disorder and doubt among the senior ranks of the NVA and communist party through their psy-ops efforts.

Although the exact numbers are hard to confirm, thousands of strategic reconnaissance missions were launched and at least a handful of successful Bright Light recovery missions were undertaken. At the height of the unit, some 2,000 US personnel were assigned to MACV-SOG, along with about 8,000 South Vietnamese, Montagnard and Nung Chinese agents. According to a US Senate report, 13 MACV-SOG operators were later awarded classified Medals of Honor.

All of that came at significant costs to the unit. 57 SOG operators were listed as missing in action. Even today, ten Recon Teams remain unaccounted for although the members of one, Recon Team Maryland, were recently laid to rest, some 43 years after they were killed in an ambush in Laos. Their remains were discovered in 2009 by a Laotian farmer and the men were finally interred in Arlington National Cemetery in 2012 with full military honours.

Indeed MACV-SOG suffered the highest casualty rates for a unit of its size since the American Civil War. At one point in 1968, for example, almost half of those assigned to the RTs were killed in action, while every single operator was wounded in action at least once. In all, 243 SOG operators lost their lives in their secret, undeclared war in North Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

HISTORY of WAR **REVIEWS**

The latest military history offerings from the shelf, screen and cinema

INDIA CONQUERED

BRITAIN'S RAJ AND THE CHAOS OF EMPIRE

Writer: Jon Wilson

Publisher: Public Affairs

Price: £25 **Released:** 25 October 2016

THE RECORD OF THE BRITISH RAJ IS TAKEN
TO TASK IN THIS DAMNING CRITIQUE

Question: how long does a guilt trip last? Answer: 504 pages. Let this reviewer nail his colours to the mast: he is a child of the empire. His father's family worked for, kowtowed to and adopted its name from the British; were condescended to and condescended in our turn, and we ended up here in the UK.

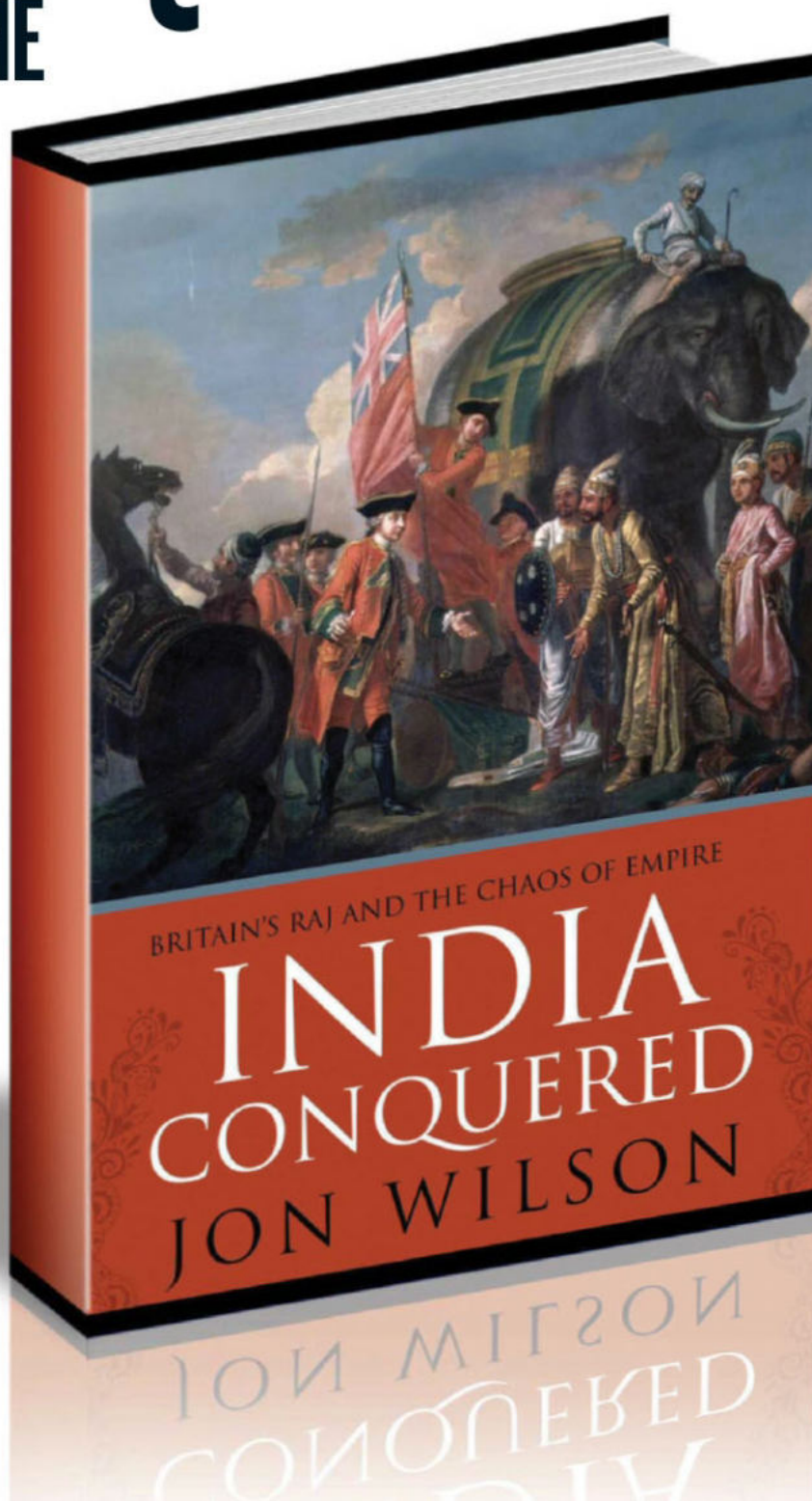
But, like the rest of the sub-continental diaspora, the people of India and its surrounding nations, we got over it. Ploughing through Wilson's work, it would appear the author hasn't. Not that Wilson doesn't know his Marathas from his Mughals: there's much of interest in this long telling of Britain's involvement in India. What lets it down is the refracting lens through which Wilson views everything.

The British are invariably portrayed as rapacious, violent and fearful, trembling in cantonments, frightened of the brown-skinned hordes. However, those occasions when India's 'native' rulers kill in the thousands are passed over or excused. One begins to suspect that the author may have transposed a morbid revulsion at UKIP voters into his reading of the past, so his portrayal of 18th-century Englishmen bears close comparison to media reports of Brexit voters.

At the same time, every possible mitigating circumstance is accepted for the violent actions of anyone with brown skin. For instance, when a group of 120 men of the East India Company are mutilated and killed in the most brutal fashion, we learn that this was, "...an attempt to reassert the status of Indians against a group of people who had walled themselves off from local society." Now, I'm not that keen on gated communities myself, but I'm not sure that makes it alright to chop someone into pieces.

The myopia continues throughout: British bad, Indians good. In the end, this is a book not so much about the chaos, but more the guilt of empire.

"HIS PORTRAYAL OF 18TH-CENTURY ENGLISHMEN BEARS CLOSE COMPARISON TO MEDIA REPORTS OF BREXIT VOTERS"



THE INVISIBLE CROSS

Writer: Andrew Davidson **Publisher:** Heron Books

Price: £20 **Released:** Out now

WHAT IT WAS LIKE TO FIGHT ON THE FRONT LINE OF THE WESTERN FRONT FOR THREE YEARS?

It really did not seem possible to shed new light on World War I – one of the most written about conflicts in history – but in this remarkable book, Andrew Davidson does just that. For three years, Colonel Graham Chaplin of the 1st Cameronians served on the front line making him, so far as we can tell, the longest-serving frontline officer of the war. Almost every day he wrote to his wife, Lil, who he had married a year before the outbreak of war, and who he left pregnant with their first child when he sailed to France as part of the British Expeditionary Force.

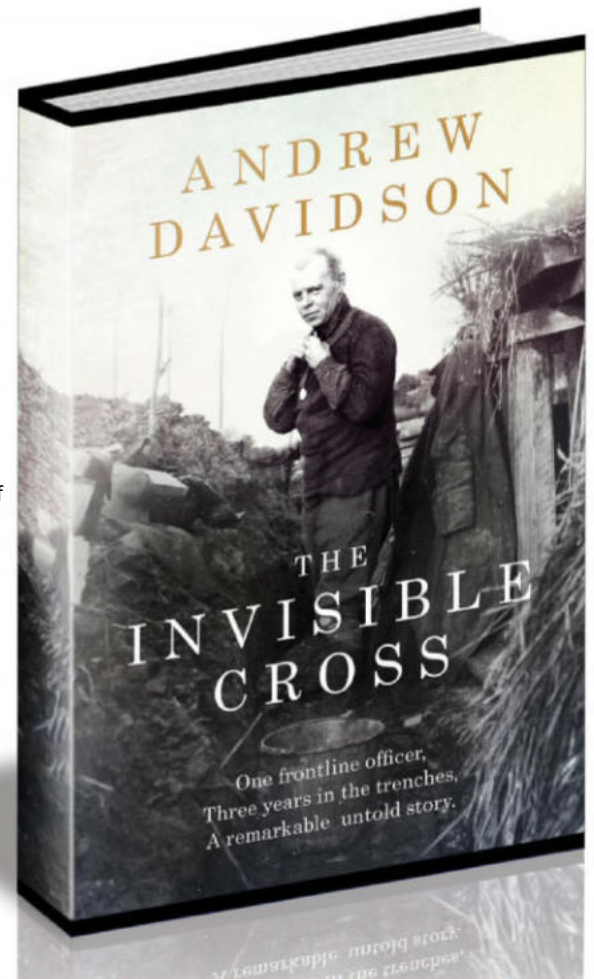
There have been many collections of soldiers' letters home, but what sets this one apart is how Davidson puts Chaplin's letters into context.

His letters, which seldom mention the war directly, begin with the breezy confidence of the professional soldier, confident of quick victory. But as victory recedes, and Chaplin is passed over for promotion, the letters become passports to sanity, a dialogue with a normality that the war is slowly erasing.

The experience of fighting industrial war can be glimpsed between the lines, but what comes across most clearly is the sheer toil of it: a combination of labour, boredom, fear and lack of sleep that slowly saps his strength.

With officers killed even faster than the ranks, Chaplin expected to be promoted out of the front line, but his querying of staff orders at the Battle of Loos led to his promotion being held back, so he fought on, marching with his men to and from trenches, fighting through the battles of Mons, Armentières, Loos and the Somme. Writing on 4 August 1917, Chaplin said, "Today is the third anniversary of the war – it seems like the third century to me."

To the relief of this reader, in 1917, Chaplin was promoted out of the front line. He survived the war, living the rest of his life with his wife and children and he seldom spoke of the war. How can anyone speak meaningfully of such a conflict? Here, long after his death and through the careful editing and contextualising of Davidson, Chaplin does so.



THE VANQUISHED

WHY THE FIRST WORLD WAR FAILED TO END, 1917-1923

Writer: Robert Gerwarth **Publisher:** Allen Lane

Price: £25 **Released:** Out now

A DETAILED LOOK INTO THE VIOLENCE AND CONSEQUENCES EUROPE AND THE MIDDLE EAST FACED ONCE THE FIGHTING OF WORLD WAR I WAS OVER

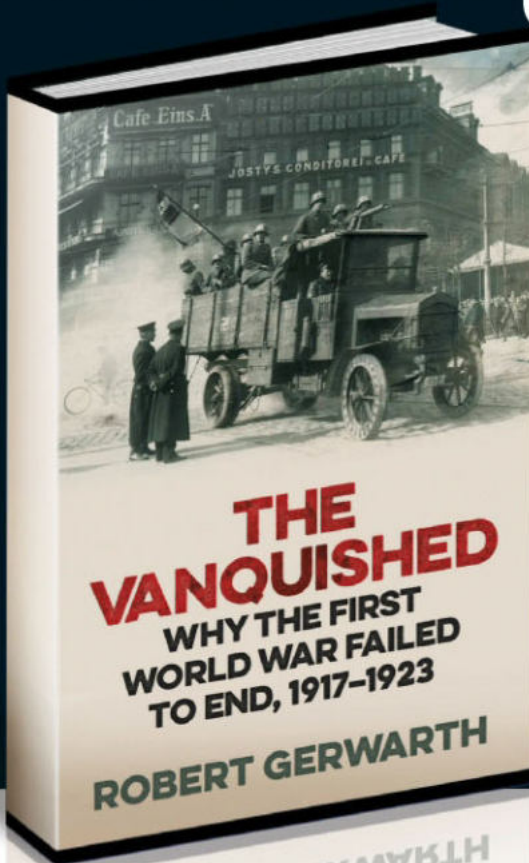
This book provides a clear and excellent account of the abrupt break-up of the Habsburg, Hohenzollern, Ottoman and Romanov empires and the difficult birth of their successor states during 1917-23. It also attempts to answer one of the central questions concerning World War I: the failure to provide a lasting peace once the Central Powers and their allies had been defeated, and to establish a viable end to the unrest and violence that had been unleashed by the war.

While for the Western allies, November 1918 marked an end to the fighting, for much of the rest of Europe, the nightmare continued. The devastating consequences in both Europe and the Middle East remain with us and continue to haunt us to this day. The author focuses on the factors that resulted in an upsurge in violence after 1917, as a result of the abrupt break-up of Europe's defeated land empires and the emergence of new and aggressive nation states. These fledgling states sought to consolidate or expand their territories in the shatter-zones of

the defeated empires through force. Violence erupted and civil wars proliferated in these emerging states during this period of social and national revolution and counter-revolution. The political violence and radicalisation was fuelled by a fear of Bolshevism and the rise of fascism.

The new states also faced territorial revisionism by the defeated powers who attempted to regain territory lost in 1918. In a brief epilogue, the book also discusses the long-term consequences, in which the period of relative stabilisation following the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 ended with the crash of 1929 and the Great Depression of the 1930s.

"THE DEVASTATING CONSEQUENCES CONTINUE TO HAUNT US TO THIS DAY"



ALL ABOUT HISTORY RECOMMENDED READING



THE A-Z OF VICTORIAN CRIME

If you need to know your Fanny Adams from your Eliza Adkins, or your Thomas Simmons from your Thomas Smethurst, then this gas-lit delve into the annals of Victorian wrongdoing is for you. Seasoned readers

might approach with a sense of trepidation, steeling themselves for the inevitable appearance of Jack the Ripper. He features, of course, yet it will come as a pleasant surprise to find he is far from the dominating figure. In fact, far more fascinating are the less famed cases dug up from the shadows.

Though some cases are gruesome, the authors wisely avoid sensationalism. An ideal book for a long autumn evening; once you have made sure all the doors are locked.



POISON PANIC

During the 1840s, the eyes of Victorian Britain were turned on Essex where poison, it seemed, was the weapon on choice. On trial for poisoning, Sarah Chesham, Hannah Southgate and Mary May captured the

imagination of a country in turmoil. Could Essex be home to a murderous circle of housewives, hell bent on chaos?

Poison Panic tells the tale of three cases that gripped the era, leading to suspicion, fear and frenzy for murder. Her research uncovered not only skeletons in her own family closet, but stories from the days when arsenic seemed to be everywhere. Barrell's meticulous research and eye for detail recreate lurking threats, and these scandalous true stories are as compelling as any crime fiction.

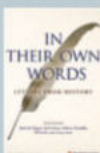


THE WHITE SHIP

Salaman's *The White Ship* takes the real-life sinking of the titular vessel, an event that triggered years of civil war over possession of the English Crown, and around it weaves a dark and complex

'what if' scenario of political intrigue, illicit affairs and vicious, bloody vengeance, recounted by the tragedy's only known survivor, Bertold – a butcher collecting debts on board when the ship went down.

With the truth of why the ship sank unknown, the author embraces the opportunity to present his version of the events leading up to that dark night. The story finds its momentum as increasingly despicable acts are committed in the name of duty and honour, and the seeds of discontent and betrayal begin to germinate.



IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Would you hesitate before rifling through someone's personal correspondence if the writer were an iconic figure? *In Their Own Words* is a hefty coffee table tome containing 80 letters from the

past, plucked from records secreted at the UK's official government archive. From President Roosevelt requesting US support against Hitler to King Philip IV of France telling his agents to support Scottish hero William Wallace – every page plunges you into another time and place.

The letters are published in their original format and also helpfully typed out where they are no longer legible. The loops and swirls of original handwriting and reading the thoughts as they tumbled onto the page, help to bring these historical figures to life.

DOES TERRORISM WORK? A HISTORY

Writer: Richard English **Publisher:** Oxford university Press

Price: £25 **Released:** Out now

THE WORLD'S MODERN CONFLICTS OFFER UP A NEW SPECTRUM OF CHALLENGES FOR GOVERNMENTS AND MILITARIES

Anyone who has read Professor English's previous books on the IRA and terrorism will open this book with great anticipation. Indeed, there is much of interest for anyone researching terrorism as a phenomenon, which pursues political change through shocking violence. In his introduction, the professor formulates a framework of questions as to the strategic and tactical success of terrorism and then analyses them within the context of four case studies: Al-Qaeda, the Provisional IRA, Hamas and ETA. This format poses problems, making it less accessible for the general reader, and diminishing the impact of the important and relevant points that are discussed.

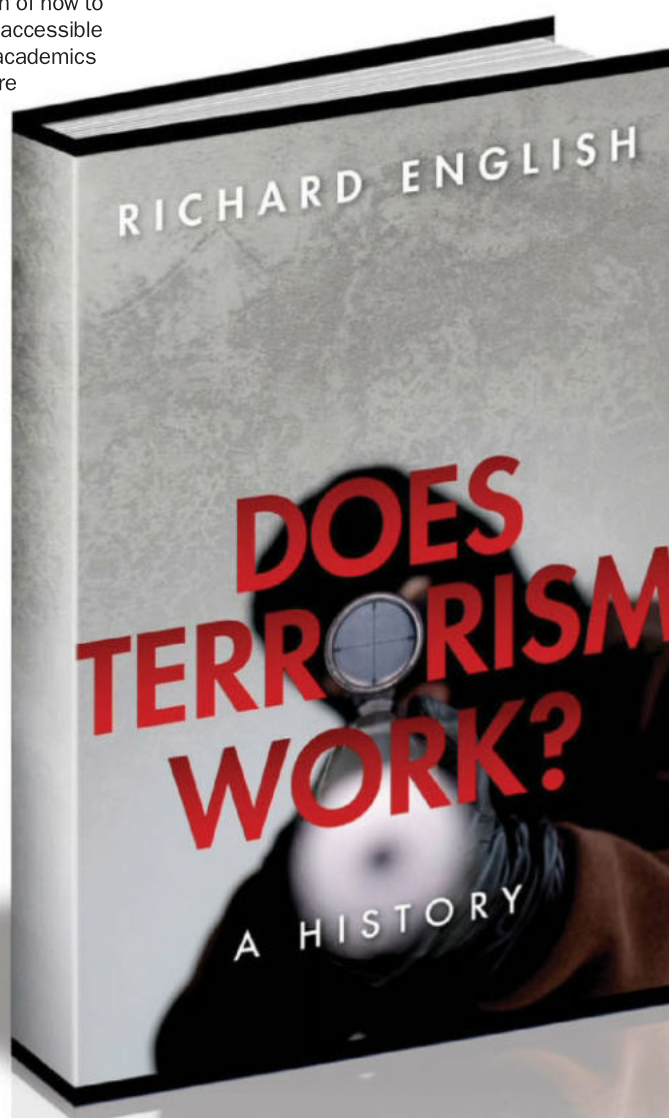
The result is rather dense, repetitive and off-putting to anyone looking for an explanation of the history of terrorism and why it continues to plague us. This raises the question of how to make an academic discussion more accessible to a wider audience in an age when academics are increasingly being asked to ensure that their research has 'impact'.

The discussion of the personal motivation of terrorists – an area that is often badly neglected – is very interesting, and it would have been useful to have more conversation of this crucial topic. The questions posed are important ones but there is little effort to make them relevant to the defeat of terrorism. There are some tantalising suggestions in the conclusion, but a deeper discussion of the research's implications that forms the core of the book would have been instructive. It is a book that should be on the bookshelf of every politician and layperson who is interested in contemporary events – but how many will actually read it?

**“THE QUESTIONS
POSED ARE
IMPORTANT BUT THERE
IS LITTLE EFFORT TO
MAKE THEM RELEVANT
TO THE DEFEAT OF
TERRORISM”**



Above: The way in which modern conflicts are fought today has drastically changed modern armed forces and their training



WORLD WAR II

1941 AND THE MAN OF STEEL

Studio: Simply Media **Running Time:** 90 mins **Price:** £19.99

THE MACABRE STORY OF A MAN WHO BROUGHT TRIUMPH AND TRAGEDY TO THE USSR IN EQUAL MEASURE

This excellent two-part DVD opens by introducing us to a rather short, somewhat tubby man, who was fond of a drink and a smoke, and who saved Britain in World War II. The man was not Winston Churchill, however, but Stalin, the USSR's 'man of steel'.

Professor David Reynolds, as writer and presenter, is as engaging and thoughtful as ever. He does not attempt the colourful impersonations that were such a feature of *1942 And Hitler's Soft Underbelly* (reviewed last month) although, in a surreal moment, a George Formby impression does find its way in.

With a backdrop of the, "...horrific, life and death struggle between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union," Reynolds tackles his subject with gusto, analysing the personal relationships at the heart of Stalin's world. Blow-by-blow accounts

of military clashes, however, are not the focus; Reynolds instead shows us how Stalin manipulated those around him, including Churchill.

The story reveals a man of small stature who, nevertheless, became a colossus through the careful and targeted use of intimidation, and a ruthless willingness to crush any hint of opposition. In Reynolds's eyes, this went beyond mere expediency; he argues that Stalin genuinely enjoyed toying with people's lives.

What prevented Stalin from following a similar path to that of Adolf Hitler, was his willingness to learn from his mistakes, which were many and costly. The perverse result was, as Reynolds eloquently puts it, that, "...the man who gained most from victory was the dictator as cruel and ruthless as his enemy."



"IN REYNOLDS'S EYES, STALIN GENUINELY ENJOYED TOYING WITH PEOPLE'S LIVES"

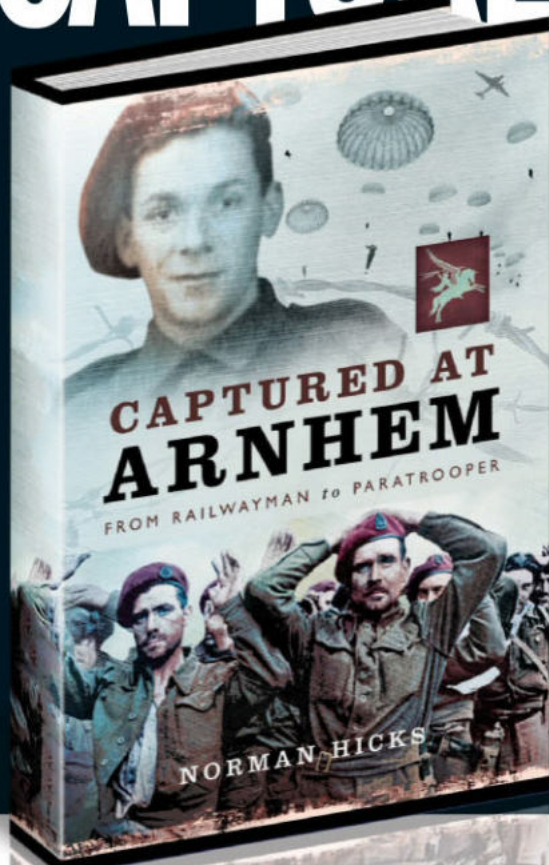
CAPTURED AT ARNHEM

FROM RAILWAYMAN TO PARATROOPER

Writer: Norman Hicks **Publisher:** Pen & Sword Military

Price: £25 **Released:** Out now

DISCOVER THE STORY OF AN EXPERIENCED SOLDIER WHO SAW EXTENSIVE ACTION IN NORTH AFRICA, SICILY AND ARNHEM



Tom Hicks fought throughout WWII from his enlistment in 1939 to being liberated by the Americans in 1945 as a prisoner of war in Germany. Like many of the wartime generation, Hicks was plucked from civilian life to take part in the most pivotal conflict of the 20th century. This book is another reminder that history is made, not just by the politicians and generals, but also by the ordinary people who take pride in their duty.

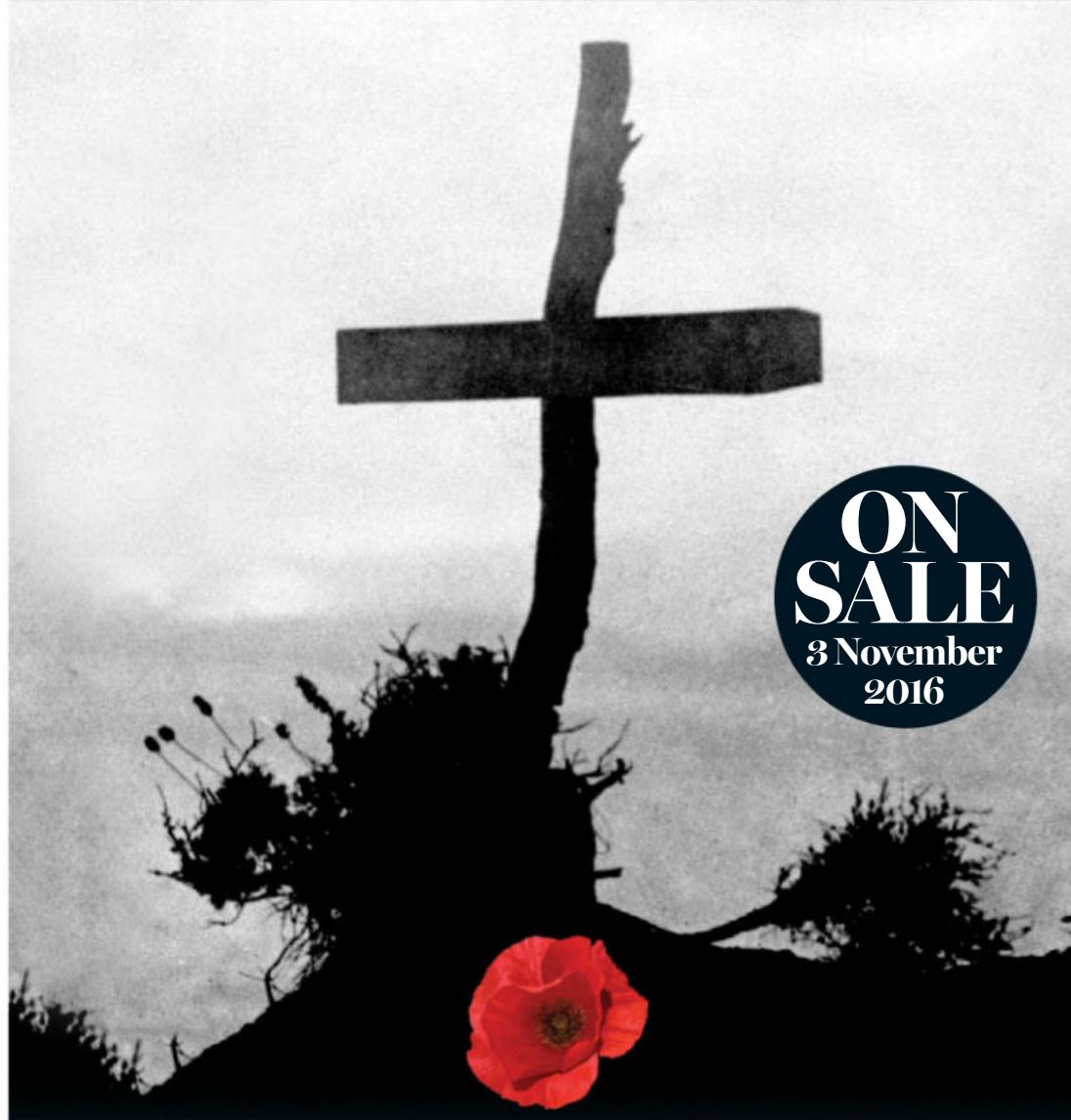
Capably written by his son Norman, *Captured At Arnhem* follows Hicks from his life working on the railways in the 1930s to becoming a sapper in the Royal Engineers. Gripped by a sense of adventure, the young man volunteered to become a paratrooper and soon became a member of the 1st Parachute Squadron, Royal Engineers. In this tight-knit group, Hicks found himself taking part in

operations in North Africa, Sicily and most significantly in Arnhem, where he was wounded and taken prisoner.

In this truly enjoyable and engaging read, Norman Hicks covers his subject in great detail. Using a variety of sources to tell his story, including his father's first-hand testimony and his wartime diary, Hicks tells a gripping tale of his father's experiences. What shines through, though, is one Yorkshireman's tireless optimism, good humour and appreciation of the comradeship that war often develops.

The book is greatly aided by a number of informative maps, images, figures and frequent contextualisation. This helps to not only track one soldier's military journey, but also his individual place and contribution to shaping one of the most decisive, and devastating, wars in history.

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'MARENGO' SNUFFBOX

In the absence of snuff, horse hair, thought to be Marengo's, is kept in the box

A relic of the Napoleonic wars, this decorative piece was made from a hoof of the emperor's horse

After the Prussian and British allies won the field at Waterloo on 18 June 1815, they found among the spoils of their victory a small grey stallion. It was of fine breeding and was well cared for. This was Napoleon's own horse, Marengo, who had served under the emperor for 16 years, having been purchased during the Egyptian Campaign (1798-1801). The emperor had named him after his own famous victory against the Austrians on 14 June 1800. In the aftermath of his master's final defeat, Marengo was taken back to England and put on display – becoming, in a sense, a living souvenir of the famous battlefield.

With his military career at an end, Marengo spent the rest of his life in relative peace and died in 1831, outliving his former master by a decade. Bizarre though it may seem to modern readers, his remains were then transformed into relics of the wars, including two of his hooves. Pictured here is one of those hooves, which was subsequently set in silver and converted into a snuff mill, to be shown off at dinner parties and social events. The piece now contains what is reputed to be a lock of Marengo's tail hair, and is currently on display at the Household Cavalry Museum, London.

"IN THE AFTERMATH OF HIS MASTER'S FINAL DEFEAT, MARENGO WAS TAKEN BACK TO ENGLAND AND PUT ON DISPLAY – BECOMING, IN A SENSE, A LIVING SOUVENIR OF THE FAMOUS BATTLEFIELD"



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In this painting of Napoleon crossing the Alps, Marengo is thought to be his mount



Image: Household Cavalry Museum



Wrath of the Northmen



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B62103 Viking Wearing Gjermundbu Helmet, Swinging Sword

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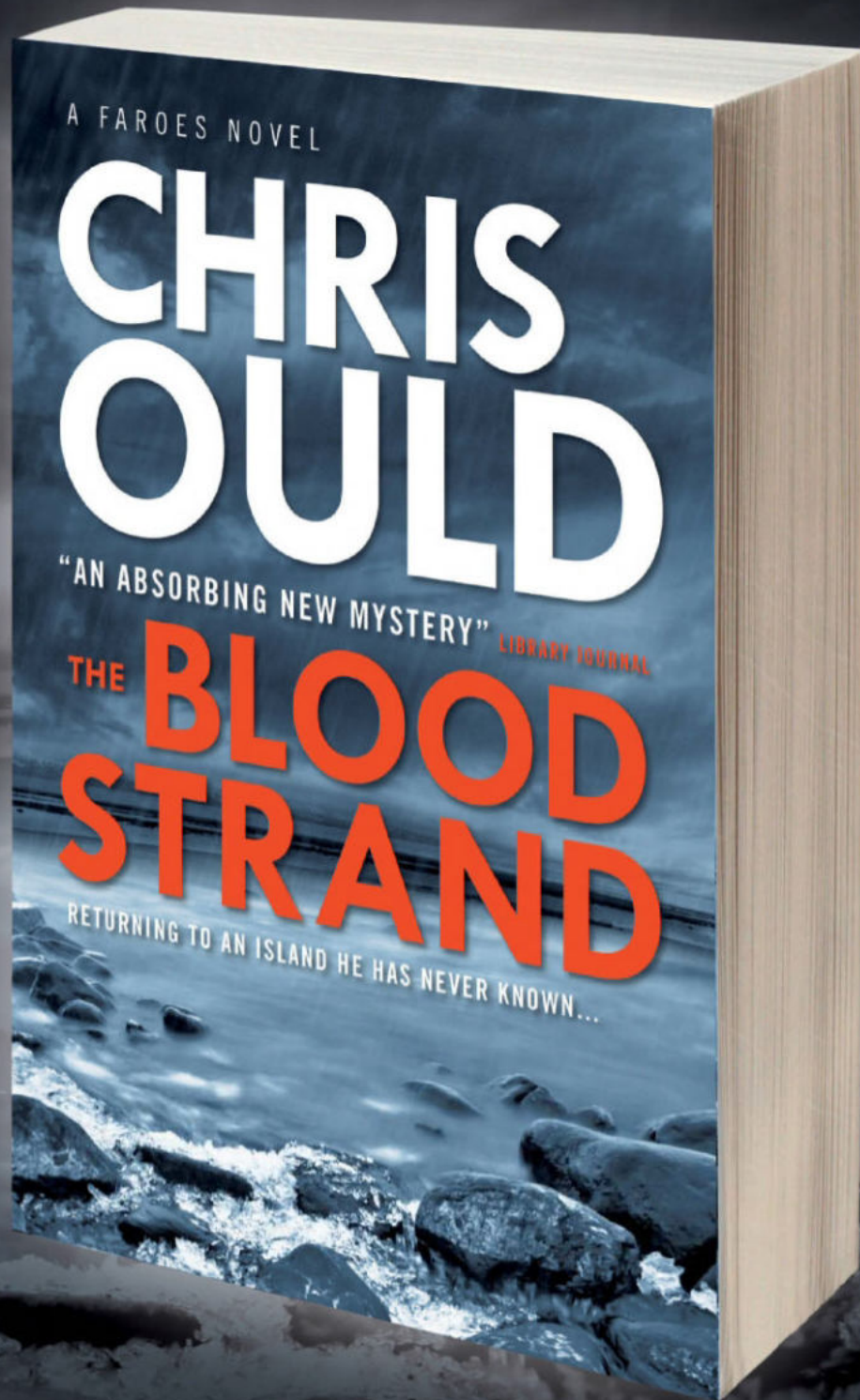
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